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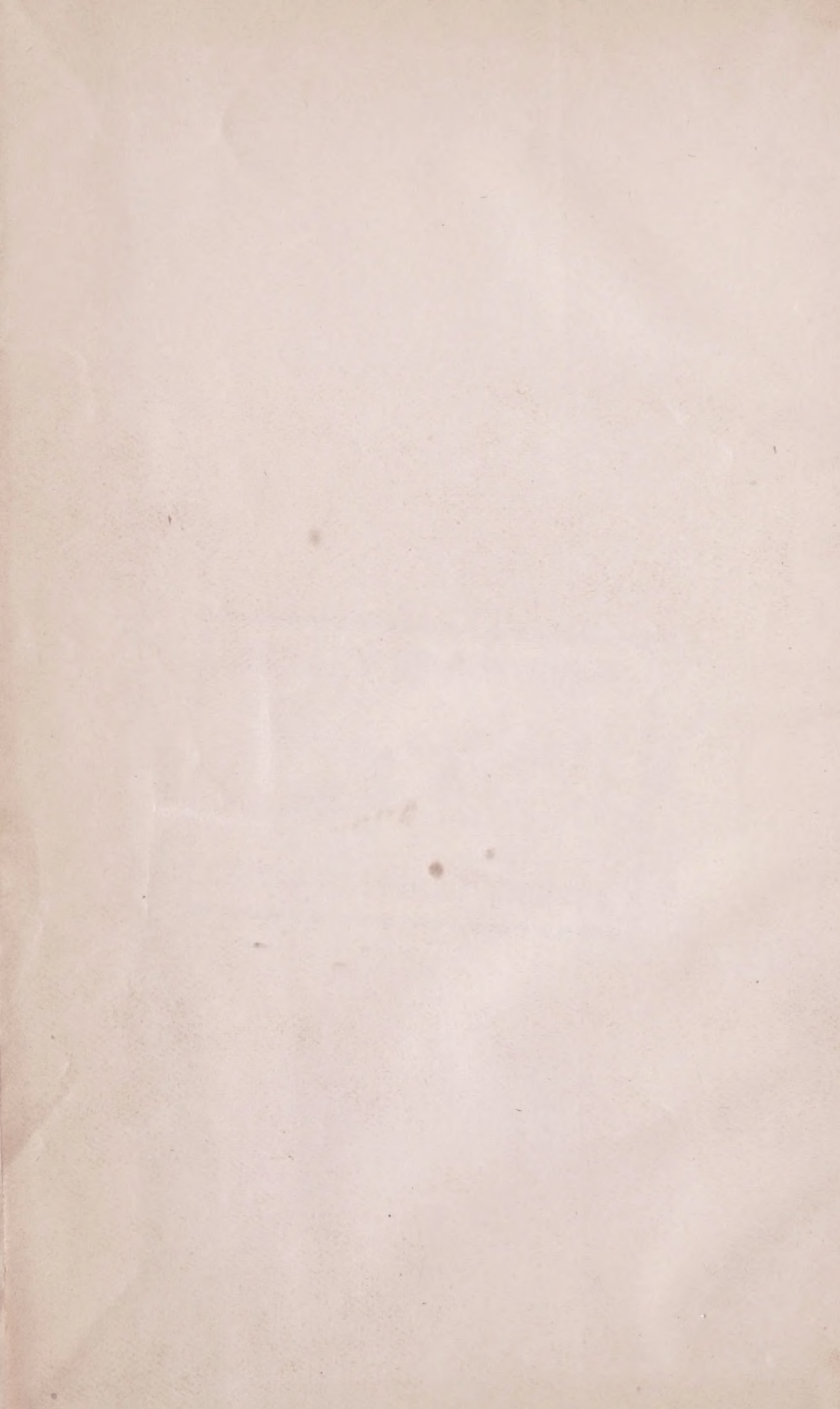
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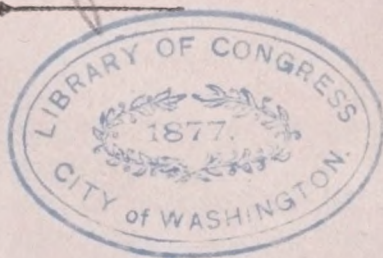


THE

LOVER UPON TRIAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"OLIVIA," "SIR PHILIP HETHERINGTON," ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK:
STRINGER & TOWNSEND,
222 BROADWAY.
UNDER THE MUSEUM.

1848

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LOVER UPON TRIAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE FINEST OF THE FINEST," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:

ETHINGTON & LOWMYER,

105 NASSAU ST.

ESTD. 1854.

THE LOVER UPON TRIAL.

"If you please, Miss Lydia, Sir William wishes to speak to you in the library."

"What"—exclaimed a young girl, seated on a low stool with a kitten on her lap, which she had just managed to insert as well as she could into a doll's frock belonging to her little sister, to the great edification of the said little sister, who stood by, delightedly watching; and perhaps also somewhat to her own, although certainly not to that of the kitten thus victimized—"what do you say, Thomas?"

"If you please, Miss Lydia, Sir William wants to speak to you;" and so saying, the tall footman left the room.

"Papa wants to speak to me in his study—and at this time of day!" exclaimed the surprised Lydia, rising up from her low seat; whilst, throwing the kitten hastily from her, she consulted the miniature watch round her neck, which corroborated the truth of the fact she suspected, that it was scarcely past noon; and a summons to any one of his children to break in upon his methodical solitude before luncheon, was an event scarcely to be recollected in the annals of the Grange.

"What *can* papa want me for, Louisa?" she continued, much in the same sort of musing, guessing way in which many are very apt to gaze at the direction of a letter in a handwriting they do not immediately recognise: pondering over it and puzzling, whilst the simple effort of opening the letter in question would at once elucidate the difficulty.

"How can I tell, dearest?" replied the more sedate and steady elder sister, who was not so easily excited to wonder, fear, admiration, or any other of the various feelings that were so quickly called forth in the younger and more volatile Lydia. "Certainly it rarely happens that my father sends for anybody

so early in the day ; yet, I dare say, nothing of importance has occurred, notwithstanding."

"What *can* it be?" replied Lydia. "And only look at my hair!" as she viewed herself in a large glass over the mantel-piece. "Papa will use his favorite simile, which he always does when every single curl is not in perfect condition—that I look as if I had been sleeping in a furze-bush all night;" and she tried to twist the disorderly ringlets into better trim, the kitten, during its forced toilet, having given them an unlucky tug.

The library bell was now heard to ring pretty sharply.

"Go, go!" said Louisa, admiring at the same time the crimson glow which the signal of impatience had brought into her sister's cheeks ; and Lydia was walking briskly out of the room, when the kitten, which had been turning and twisting about in every direction—in the vain hope of getting rid of its troublesome and novel costume, to which had been added a cap by way of head-dress—half mad with vexation, took to bounding and capering about in so ludicrous a manner, that, in spite of her uncertainty and half alarm, Lydia burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which was echoed by little Fanny ; and the wonderful summons was nearly forgotten, when in again walked the footman, with a—

"Miss Lydia, if you please, Sir William told me to say he is waiting."

Down, half ran, half tumbled Lydia, forced to quit the amusements for the realities of life—and almost panted with haste and the previous exertions of laughter, as she entered the study, somewhat dreaded at such an undue hour of the day.

"Why, Lydia," said Sir William Middlemore, who was seated in his accustomed arm-chair, though without his usual apparatus of books, maps, and writing materials, spread out upon the round table near him, "I thought you could not have understood that I sent for you."

The quick eye of Lydia saw at once, from the unusual appearance of his table, that he had not been at his accustomed morning's occupations, and felt that this betokened that something out of the common way had happened, or was about to happen.

"Papa, I beg your pardon, but I was dressing up the kitten to please Fanny, as it was a holiday ; and I was so untidy, and then the kitten was so truly ridiculous, that I was obliged to have my laughing fit fairly out;" and at the bare recollection of the ridiculous *figurante*, she was inclined to relapse into her previous merriment ; but her father's grave and rather annoyed look checked the propensity, and her hitherto playful countenance assumed an expression of seriousness and composure.

"To please Fanny, and I presume partly yourself. Well, I must say that a young lady nearly twenty ought to have had enough of kittens and play by that time. But do not stand there, my dear. Sit down; I have something to say to you."

Lady Middlemore was seated not far from her husband, although a little in the background; but she was knitting busily, and did not even look up to catch Lydia's inquiring glance. Lady Middlemore never happened to have what she termed her idle work at that time of the day, more particularly in Sir William's study; therefore her knitting was another out-of-the-way occurrence. There must be something remarkable going on.

"My dear Lydia," said Sir William, with emphasis, "you are arrived at what are commonly called years of discretion. How far that term applies to you I will not pretend to say. However, you are old enough to be married: that is to say again, what the world would call old enough to be married. For my part, I think no woman really fit for such an event until four or five-and-twenty. To my mind, no female character, person, or constitution, is finally formed or determined until at least four-and-twenty: no woman, I conceive, knows her own mind, or rather is really acquainted with certain of her own opinions and tastes, before that period. At four or five-and-twenty I consider a woman like a fruit that is then arrived at its perfection: that is to say, comparative perfection—the degree of it which the individual woman is capable of attaining—some more, some less. You understand me, my dear?"

Here Sir William paused, and took a pinch of snuff. Had he continued to descant upon the interesting subject for twice as long a time as he had done, Lydia would not have dreamt of interrupting him; for Sir William could not pardon an interruption, even from his pet daughter Lydia.

This snuffy pause, however, fully authrised her to speak; but she remained silent, for she really hardly knew what she ought to say. She was puzzled and amazed, and was anxious for her father to speak out, and at once; but that was not his way, of which she was fully aware. Lady Middlemore appeared to be knitting away with a slight degree of impatience in her manner—at least so her daughter fancied; but as Lydia's imagination was apt to gallop, she might be mistaken.

At length Sir William resumed his address to his daughter.

"You perceive, by what I have now, and I think before now, said, that I am no friend to early marriages; yet there are occasions when we may be tempted to put on one side our preconceived opinions, and make them bend—rather, I should say, yield—to circumstances. There is, perhaps, nothing more erro-

neous—often nothing more prejudicial to our interests, or those belonging to us—than taking up an opinion; unless, indeed, it be one based on a moral foundation which no one can question; but there is nothing worse than taking up an opinion which is not of vital importance, and standing sturdily and steadily by it, as if life and death depended upon its maintenance. There is nothing worse than prejudice but obstinacy; and indeed they most frequently go hand in hand.”

It probably never entered into Sir William’s head, while spinning out this long and would-be-philosophical oration, that he himself was not entirely free from either of these two failings. Whether such a suspicion, however, occurred to Lady Middlemore, or whether her quieter spirit was desirous of imparting a little of its velocity to her slower partner, who shall determine? But it was evident to Lydia, that the thread of her mother’s knitting had such a sudden twitch, that it broke in two: perhaps the thread of her father’s discourse was connected with it.

“You will see, therefore,” continued Sir William, “that, notwithstanding my long-formed, and I think well-grounded opinion, as to the right age for women to marry, I am ready to sacrifice that opinion, in case there should be good cause for doing so—and I see this cause now. Mr. Mornington has been with me already, at this undue and early hour of the day for visitors, to propose for you, Lydia;” and here Sir William could not entirely control the satisfied smile which played round the outskirts of his mouth.

“Mr. Mornington!” exclaimed his daughter; “and for me, papa!” whilst a vivid blush overspread her pure and delicate complexion; the sudden glow being probably caused partly by a degree of almost pardonable vanity and self-satisfaction at having received her first decided offer of marriage, and partly from the conviction that was immediately formed in her mind, that she never could marry a Mr. Mornington.

Sir William, in spite of his comfortable self-satisfaction in his own abilities, was not altogether a first-rate connoisseur in young ladies’ blushes, though of course he felt sure he would have been, had he thought it worth while to consider the subject; but he had not—at least not for many a long year—not since he had settled steadily and comfortably down into matrimony with *his* bride of five-and-twenty. So he did not, therefore, quite understand the force of Lydia’s blush, or the expression of her countenance. Lady Middlemore, however, had given both one of her rapid glances, and knew at once all that her daughter was feeling on this occasion. Such is the discernment of a quick and watchful mother.

"Yes: for *you*, Lydia," continued Sir William, turning round and round upon the little finger of his left hand a valuable cameo ring, of which, as well as of the hand it ornamented, he was somewhat proud—it was a habit of his, during the occasional pauses of anything like a *conversation suivie*; "and once setting aside your youth, I see great advantages—yes, very great advantages—in such a match; and I think you have, upon the whole, too much good sense not to agree with me, my dear Lydia."

Another pinch of snuff, and an appealing look at his daughter, which plainly showed he expected an answer, induced her to say, in spite of the little coaxing insinuation as to her good sense, with some of the quietness natural to her, and which even Sir William tolerated in his pet child:

"Dear papa, I could never like such a sort of person as Mr. Mornington."

Sir William looked surprised, although he certainly could not feel all he looked, with his knowledge of his daughter's character, and said:

"Such a sort of person, Lydia! what do you mean by that, I should like to know? I believe much more than half the young ladies in our country would jump at such a proposal."

"Then, dear papa, let them jump and have him; they are quite welcome to him—any one of them, at least, I mean: I will resign him with the greatest readiness. I never could marry such a person as Mr. Mornington."

"Now, Lydia, you are on the point of going off into one of your wild, enthusiastic sallies. Oh that I could impart to you a little more ballast to steady you! Pray now, tell me what you can find in Mr. Mornington to prevent his making an excellent husband?"

"A great deal, papa," said the animated girl, who, now the ice was once broken and the good-sense part of the business fairly set on one side, plunged through thick and thin, determined to maintain her cause, however bad a one it might prove in her father's eyes, but equally determined, when once he began one of his long speeches, to let it take its due course without interrupting him; for Sir William, although by no means wanting in abilities, was not altogether quite so wise as he thought himself—and, moreover, was not unfrequently that greatest of all bores—a slow, methodical proser, even when the matter was good; and a picker and chooser of apt and emphatic words, which if he could not immediately find—and he had not a ready flow of language—he would pause, hesitate, consider and change one word for another, until he flattered himself he had gotten

the right one. In short, he was the very reverse of that rare thing, an *improvisatore*.

"A great deal, Lydia! that is because you have at the youthful, rather the immature, age of twenty—not twenty either until the ensuing month—allowed your imagination to run away with your reason; to fancy—to—to paint sundry—striking—brilliant qualifications, that you think desirable, or, properly speaking, even necessary in the man—the being who is to be your husband."

"Oh, papa, I am not indeed so very particular; but still there are a few, a very few things that I could not dispense with in a husband."

"Well, Lydia, let us hear; enumerate the very few. I will count their number as you proceed;" and he threw himself back on his arm-chair, crossed his legs, and placed the forefinger of his right hand on the thumb of the left, which displayed the hands and the favorite ring to great advantage; whilst at the same time it plainly said, "Now for number *one*!" There was something rather awful in this preparation for calculating poor imaginative ladies' requisites: it only fell short of making a catalogue with pen, ink, and paper. The lively but somewhat determined being before him rather shrank from the account she was about to give of her "very few requisites;" for one lightning flash of thought had convinced her there were many more that her steadier parent would think rational. However, having committed herself, she was determined not to flinch; and taking courage again, she said, "Papa, he must be a perfect gentleman."

"One!" said Sir William, and went on to the first finger.

"He must also look like one: be tall, and at all events not have red hair."

"So said Benedict. Number two; though these are three requisites in one, I think," said Sir William.

"He must be clever, agreeable, and well-read."

"Three; or rather thirty, in the way you go on, Lydia."

She laughed.

"Perfectly good-tempered, kind-hearted, and charitable."

Sir William here made a dead pause.

"Charitable, as you well know, my dear Lydia, is a word that admits of more than one construction—a great fault in language, by-the-way, I consider it, when one word has various meanings; but we will enlarge on that copious subject another time;" and Sir William again paused, and looked as if he could say an immensity on that "copious subject;" but he checked himself and continued:

"When you are describing, you should learn to explain. to—

to express yourself with perfect clearness, so that your listener should be able to conceive, to understand; rather, should be enabled to make himself completely master of your meaning. Now, what sort of charity *do* you mean? Kindly thoughts and forbearance in all ways towards your fellow-creatures, or mere alms-giving?"

"Oh, Papa! I did mean charity in the commonest acceptation of the word—being good to the poor."

"Oh, very well," and he pointed to another finger. "Go on, my dear."

"Then he must have pleasing, attractive manners, and address and countenance that win at once—a sort of irresistible something. I do not of course care much about actual beauty in a man, always supposing him to have a very good figure; but he must be engagingly good-looking, with an intelligent countenance."

Sir William nodded, and went on counting.

"Then he must talk well: not too much or too little; for an incessant chatterer and a determinedly silent man are equally disagreeable."

"What next, my dear?"

He was come back the second time to the starting-post thumb, and the adding up seemed endless.

"Now, Papa, I have just done: he *must* be fond of music and poetry, otherwise he is not for me."

"Anything more, my dear?"

"Yes—what I ought to have begun with: he must be a really good and religiously-disposed person, otherwise it seems to me a wife could place no reliance on her husband."

Sir William kept his fingers in the counting position, and looked at her.

"I have said all, my dear father," she said, laughing.

"I have not required so very much; have I?"

"I have counted fingers and thumb twice over," said Sir William, rather solemnly; "and you, Lydia, have described a being little—if at all—short of perfection. Where, child, would you find such a man as this?"

"Oh, papa!" she replied, somewhat confused, yet playfully, "I do not know where; though on doubt there are many such in the world, only we may not have happened to see them. You know we see so few people, particularly gentlemen."

"I am sorry to tell you, my dear, if, as Falstaff said of reasons, your lovers were as 'plenty as blackberries,' you would not find one in a hundred—nay, in a thousand—like the creature you have been describing as necessary to your happiness as a wife."

"Well, dear papa, I am sorry you think me so over-exacting; but if I am so, you must be aware who has fostered fastidiousness in me a little; namely, my own dear father, who has often confessed that there are few people in whose society he finds much pleasure."

Lydia had a good deal of natural penetration; but it required more knowledge of the world, and a greater investigation into the hidden cause of feelings and opinions, to divine that the reason for her father's not caring so much for society perhaps was, because society did not always take pleasure in himself; for it has already been said that Sir William, with all his good abilities, was much too frequently long and prosy—always, unluckily, when he most wished to shine. We will not determine how far Lady Middlemore, while knitting and listening, might have been silently making this comment; certain it is, she was far too good a wife ever to have given it utterance to any human being in the course of her life.

"You know, papa, if one does not marry a man in every way superior to one's self, one had better never marry at all. Think what it would be to ask one's husband some question with reference to ancient history, or the works of some Greek or Roman author, for instance, which, from a person with classical learning like yours, papa," said the coaxing but sincere girl, for she meant what she said, "one is generally sure to have answered satisfactorily; and to see him—the husband, I mean—stare and bid one consult a historical or biographical dictionary; or to meet with a Latin note in a book one is reading, to beg him to translate it, and to find that he has forgotten every word of the language, even if he ever understood it. Oh! I could not endure to have my mind rusting, as it were, from my intercourse with my own husband, and to be forced to turn solely to books to keep the edge of it a little sharp, otherwise to rust on for life."

Lady Middlemore for a moment turned her eyes from her work, upon her child, with something very much like an approving glance; but still she said nothing; for when once Sir William had undertaken to handle a subject, it was a known thing that he did not like the stream of his eloquence, however slow in its course, to be either turned aside, or mingled with that of any other person, even had that person been a second Cicero or Demosthenes, unless he himself counted it as a tributary stream.

"And pray how do you know, my clever young lady," said the father, smiling affectionately at his darling, whose little compliment to his learning had greatly conciliated him; "how do you know that Mr. Mornington is incapable of giving you all the information you might desire?"

"Oh, papa! I have only to look in his face—that dull, heavy face; besides, I have had proofs of his actual ignorance; for the last time we had a dinner-party—the only time he ever dined here—somebody was telling of the exact situation of Mount Ararat, and it happened to come out that he thought it was in Turkey in Europe."

"Well, that might possibly be, and yet he might be generally well-informed. Men not unfrequently lose much of their early acquaintance with geography, unless they keep it up by reading constantly with maps. After all, as Mount Ararat is not much talked about now, this was more biblical ignorance than anything else."

"More's the pity, papa: he can never have read his Bible, if he does not know whereabouts is Mount Ararat."

"I do not quite agree to that either: it does not seem to me any proof of his ignorance of the Bible in general. What say you, my dear?" and Sir William turned at last towards his wife.

"By no means," answered Lady Middlemore, knitting on as before.

One word—one little word—from her mother weighed fifty times more with Lydia than a dozen of her father's set speeches; and she at once felt convinced that she herself was making the worst of things. However, she still said, "Well, papa, notwithstanding this want of actual proof, I will—don't be shocked, for I know you reprobate the phrase from a lady's lips—but I would lay any wager in the world that Mr. Mornington is not a well-informed man."

"Time will show," said Sir William, taking a pinch of snuff very leisurely. "But pray what objections have you to make against him?"

"Oh, papa! a hundred. Indeed, I can see no recommendation in him, except his height: I own that is almost a fault; for six feet three, which I am sure he is, is too tall even to please one who admires height, as I do; and as for his figure, it is so Herculean that he looks as if he could knock down poor slight little me with one touch of his so-called little finger;" and she could not resist a wicked smile and a quick glance at her mother. She almost fancied she saw something approaching to a slight curl round the sides of her mother's lips.

"I assure you, Lydia," resumed Sir William, "men consider him very good-looking, and he is universally well spoken of; and you must remember that one of your requisites is, that your husband must be a general favorite."

"Oh, papa!" replied Lydia, with her usual quickness, "that

is not a case in point. A person may be very generally well thought of, without being very generally a favorite. You, I know, think very highly in all essentials of our curate, Mr. S——; but I know full well you do not like him."

Sir William could not controvert this assertion, and was rather what is called posed: he rubbed his cameo with his silk pocket-handkerchief somewhat busily, looking at it as if he had found something amiss. At last he said:

"My dear Lydia, this is all very well—sounds very clever and refined; but allow me to say, that such very young ladies as yourself, who, as I hope to have convinced you, are not formed, I should say settled, in their tastes and opinions, ought to be very careful how they pass judgment so quickly, so hastily—rather, so prematurely—on one of whom they know so little. We have seen Mr. Mornington about five or six times; and thus you really can form no just estimate of his good or bad qualities, whatever they are."

"Then, papa, how is it you already want me to marry him, as I see you do?"

Sir William was quite taken aback. He found himself obliged to tuck a little, if not go about altogether. There was no plain sailing for him with Lydia: she had all her wits about her.

"My dear," replied her father, somewhat perplexed how to manœuvre, "I have not said I wished you to marry, or perhaps even accept, Mr. Mornington directly, if you cannot do so with comfort to yourself; but there is no need to refuse him at once; you can let me say you will have pleasure in seeing more of him before you decide."

"Pray, dear papa, do not say anything about *my* pleasure; for, if I were to be pleased, I should certainly say that as a lover"—and a little, half-amused, half-satisfied smile parted her red lips, and just allowed a peep of her pretty little teeth—"I should never desire to see him again."

"My dear Lydia," resumed the half-discomfited father, making a sign for her to reseal herself—for she had started from her chair, as hoping the conference was ended—"be not in such haste." Lydia reseated herself with a suppressed sigh, although looking resigned; for, as she heard her father's clock strike half-past twelve, she remembered that at that time a certain dress-maker was to come over some miles to try upon herself and her sisters some new dresses she was making for them.

"You know, my dear child, how we are circumstanced: that our means are hardly equal to our necessary expenditure; that there are three of you girls, all grown or growing up, and little Fan following fast after you. Then there are your two brothers.

who are unavoidably a great expense to me ; so that it really would be a most desirable circumstance if either of you two elder ones were well married." All this came so thoroughly from the heart, that Sir William, as was his wont under the influence of such feelings, had no thoughts of being eloquent, or of picking and choosing words. Many people considered it a great pity that this *laissez aller* style did not more often occur.

"You know," he continued, "we live rather retiredly, and have not an extensive neighborhood ; that the chances of your settling well—nay, settling at all—are against you ; and that your elder sister Louisa, beautiful as she is considered, and with whom you, Lydia, cannot be for one moment compared, although rapidly advancing towards that age which I consider the best for a woman's marrying, has as yet never had a regular offer."

"Oh ! just as good as a regular offer," said Lydia, eagerly ; "for could any one be more really in love than was poor Arthur Selby with her ?—only, you know, she threw cold water on the whole affair. Besides that——"

"Well, well," said Sir William, "we will not discuss these matters now. Arthur Selby's affair was a vexing one ; and as for the other—— But no matter. I much wish *you* would patiently and quietly go on seeing Mr. Mornington ; and if you will, I think you may very possibly change your mind about him."

"Dear papa, of course I will do all you wish ; but you must promise me you will tell him that I will do so at your request solely. I will not give him hopes which I may never—nay, I am sure I shall never—realize. Well, I think it rather strange he did not fancy Louisa instead of me."

"I think so too," said the mother, thinking she might now speak, as her husband seemed almost to have exhausted all he had to say : not so much because Louisa is the handsomer, but that I should have fancied her quiet style of manner more suited to his taste."

"However strange, so it is," said Sir William ; "and you, Lydia, may never again have the power of accepting or refusing a man with eight thousand a-year, and more in prospect ; and pray, my dear child, do not be in one of your hurries to decide ; but for once, and the occasion is an important one, take time to think dispassionately."

Though it was unseen by her husband, one of Lady Middlemore's speaking looks was visible to the eyes of Lydia, who could not help suspecting from it, that her mother perhaps did not altogether expect such a subject could be considered quite dispassionately by a girl of Lydia's age and disposition.

Lydia was again rising, in the hope she might now escape, try on her new dress, and then find an opportunity of informing Louisa of the great event of the morning—an event which, notwithstanding their mutual wonder at the summons to the library neither of them had in any way anticipated, when her father gave another signal for her reseating herself, and then added, with much emphasis:

“And now, Lydia, I depend upon you for giving Mr. Mornington a fair trial. I shall tell him he is welcome to visit the Grange as often as he likes; and I must request, that without prejudice, and if possible with the idea that you may eventually like him, you will do your utmost to find out all the good I am inclined to believe there is in his character and abilities; and I more particularly beg you will not be constantly comparing him with the creature of your fancy”—and here he began to relapse into a strain of eloquence—“with, I should sooner say—although the epithet is too hacknied a one altogether to please me—with the *beau ideal* you evidently have already conceived in your too exalted—rather, too imaginative—mind, and whose picture you have been so recently portraying with the gloomy—nay, rather the gaudy and brilliant—colors into which your too-easily-excited ideas and over-refined feelings are apt to dip their fairy brush, and which, like the fascinating but unsubstantial hues of our own admired painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, have a momentary charm, which, alas! has been found as unlasting as fascinating!”

Sir William had an original of that elegant artist's before his eyes at that moment, in the portrait of a lovely great-grandmother of his own, whose roses were most sadly faded, though there were still the grace of attitude, and the perfection of gesture that distinguished so many of his productions.

Sir William had fixed his eyes upon the portrait in question; but slowly withdrawing them to turn them upon one whose delicate but bright coloring was, from the previous conversation, more than usually heightened, he said—

“I also much wish”—but here, fortunately for poor Lydia, whose dutiful, filial patience was getting sorely tried, the luncheon-bell rang out its sonorous tones; and as Sir William's punctuality equalled one of Breguet's first-rate chronometers, he instantly ceased, arose, put the one or two books on his table in order, placed his chair in its usual precise situation, from which, some how or other, it appeared to have deviated a few inches, and then turning to his wife, with a courteous “Come, my dear,” he gave her his arm. Lydia, feeling like a bird out of a cage, unseen by either parent, gave one quick *pirouette* upon her

heel, and followed them into the dining-room, where there were already assembled the handsome Louisa and the two school-room young ladies, Flora and Fanny. So the poor dress-maker was obliged to wait, and Lydia was obliged to wait until the time should come when she might be able to converse without restraint with Louisa, but that was not now; for it was the two younger girls' dinner, and such an important event as an offer of marriage could not be discussed at once before them; and as for the two elder sisters either postponing or hurrying their luncheon, that was not to be thought of; for Sir William would have deemed such proceedings ill-bred and indecorous.

Method was his hobby, and punctuality was its twin-sister, both of which he equally cherished. He had never been known to relax from his clockwork system but once, when he was most seriously ill, and then, though no longer able to eat, drink, sleep, walk, read, and write, by line and by rule, yet his physician had been heard to declare, that he had never in his whole practice had a patient who had taken every one of his many draughts so thoroughly to the moment as Sir William Middlemore, whilst the latter always chose to attribute his recovery to this his extreme punctuality.

Query?—Which is worse—too little method and punctuality or too much? It is a knotty point, beyond our abilities to decide. It might, perhaps, become a Whig and Tory question; but certainly the Radicals, if not the Whigs, would all be for the too little method.

It was a saying of the Greeks, I believe, "Welcome misfortune, if you come alone!" and it is strange—but how apt is every sort of incident, whether good or bad, to be followed up by another! Days and days would often elapse at the Grange without any event, however trifling, occurring to break the placid monotony of the lives of its inhabitants—not even so much as a neighbor's visit; but on this important day, it did so happen, that after the great event of the morning, some intimate acquaintances, who were on their road to a remote watering place, most unexpectedly took the Grange on their way, and claimed the hospitality of a dinner and a few hours' rest, before proceeding onwards to the distant town where they were to pass the first night of their two days' journey, as the country through which they were travelling was not as yet blessed, or cursed, as it may be variously thought, by a railroad. At any other time the arrival of their friends would have been a pleasure to all parties; but just now Lydia pined to be alone with her sister, and feared that there would be no chance of that for some hours to come. Just, however, as Louisa was quietly slipping away,

at a sign from her mother, to give orders for an earlier dinner, and any necessary addition to it, Lydia, close to whom she was obliged to pass, whispered softly, "Mr. Mornington wants me to marry him!"

Louisa, in spite of her great natural self-control, made a dead stop, but only for a second; she gave one look at her sister's laughing, careless face, and went away satisfied that it would never be a match. Still she did wish that the Henley family had not happened to visit them just now. She wished so much for a comfortable *causerie* with her sister, or with their mother; but both the one and the other must be dispensed with for some hours; and Louisa did not grumble, for she had long accustomed herself to bear most things with cheerful equanimity—enviable being!

However, as time will pass, although not always so quietly as we wish, the hour for dinner came at last, and then soon after coffee, and the travelling carriage, and the guests took their leave. The evening—a soft May evening—with a young moon, promised the two sisters a charming confidential stroll in the grounds, perhaps even as far as the water-mill, where they were so apt to linger to watch the stream dancing and glancing with its thousands of diamonds in the sun's or the moon's beams: types of human life, every one of those tiny brilliants standing out well defined for a moment; the next, gone, lost, and forgotten amongst the multitude that rise up to succeed their forerunners, and as speedily to disappear and be forgotten in their turn.

But a walk, either on the grounds or to the mill, was not to be for them that evening: it was to be a day of events and *contretems*. The Henleys' carriage was scarcely out of sight, and not out of hearing, when in walked the lover upon trial—for Sir William had found time to escape from the visitors, as they consisted only of ladies—to his beloved study, where, after considerable consideration, sundry rough copies, endless corrections, tearing, and recommencing, he had concocted and turned out, in the very neatest and cleverest of hands, the following letter, which proved sufficient encouragement to Mornington to bring him to the Grange the same evening:

DEAR MR. MORNINGTON—Since I had the honor of seeing you this morning, I have laid your flattering proposal before my daughter Lydia, and after a colloquy of some length, in which I trust I did full and ample justice to the many sterling and excellent qualities I believe distinguish your character, I have to inform you of the result of this my communication to my daughter. She is still so very young, and seems at present so little inclined to exchange her single—and as a parent, I will fondly hope happy

single life—for the possible but yet uncertain felicity of the married state, that I found, after a careful examination of her feelings, opinions, and wishes, she was desirous, for the present at least, not to accept the offer of your hand and heart, however gratifying such an offer must and ought to be, bringing with it, as it does, the knowledge that you regard your union with her as an event essentially conducive to your happiness. However, allow me to say, I hope this will not be regarded as too decided a discouragement to your wishes; for, I feel perfectly convinced—and her mother, whom I must be permitted here to panegyrisé as one of the most discerning and unremittingly watchful of parents—is equally secure that her daughter's affections are perfectly and entirely disengaged. I have assured her that she altogether owes it to you not to reject at once your overtures, until time may enable her to become better acquainted with your character, disposition, and tastes (a knowledge of which is to a certain degree necessary, to ensure the happiness of married life), when, I am inclined to think, as well as to hope, she will eventually find all those good and attractive qualities in you, that will finally induce her, with every prospect of felicity, to become your cherished partner for the remainder of her existence. She has, however, with that refinement of delicacy which has always been the most striking trait in her character, expressly requested me to state, that she feels that any favorable result of this intercourse I am desirous she should for a time permit, is so very uncertain, that she hopes that hereafter, should it not prove all you wish, you will at least exonerate her from having held out to you any encouragement, or any false hopes, on a subject to you of so much importance and anxious interest. I must, before I terminate, candidly own to you, my dear Mornington, that I espouse your cause with all my heart, and give you from this time *carte blanche* to visit us in our unpretending, but I must think not altogether unattractive home, whenever, you feel disposed to do so. More than this I must not promise, as the fulfilment of your best and dearest wishes must altogether depend upon my daughter's feelings, and ultimate decision. That it may be in your favor, is the sincere wish of

Yours, very sincerely,

WILLIAM R. J. MIDDLEMORE.

The Grange, May—

Into how many fewer lines this epistle might have been compressed, it is not for me to decide: there is long and short work in the style of writing, as in that of architecture, but it is not every one who can arrive at the latter; and certainly Sir Wil-

liam Middlemore was not of the number. To save his life—or we will believe, that of another—perhaps with great difficulty, he might have contrived to be laconic; but such a necessity never had, or was likely to come in his way; so the possibility remains to be proved. However, the letter, such as it was, succeeded; for Francis Charles Mornington, Esq., of Highwood Park, possessor of an income of eight thousand a-year, and still more in prospect, was sufficiently satisfied with its contents, to walk into the comfortable and pretty drawing-room at the Grange, on the same evening, to the utter failure of the projected confidential walk.

Lydia gave one of her expressive glances, that told of despair, at Louisa; but mechanically walked up to the side of her mother, with a deep blush, as if to find a shelter from the intrusion of the unlucky lover, near the beloved parent, to whom that day had been sown so thickly with trifling occurrences; she had not been able to utter one word on the all-important subject that had been canvassed in the study, almost exclusively by her father. For there were times when Lady Middlemore made a point of not obtruding her remarks or opinions—times when she knew it would not answer to do so; and that of the morning's conversation had been one. Yet, in a quiet and unpretending way, she had acquired immense, although almost unperceived, influence over her whole family, even with the apparently all-important master of it, although to a more superficial observer it might seem that Sir William was the mainspring, not only around which every family wheel revolved, but which set every one of them in motion: but how much of *seeming* is there not in this our world?

Mr. Mornington's bow, on entering the drawing-room, was not in that elegant style that might for the moment have propitiated his admired, refined, perhaps over-refined Lydia. It was the bow of a man who had been perfectly taught that mode of salutation—which is one that so much distinguishes the high-bred from the ordinary gentleman—by his *quondam* dancing-master: he bent the whole upper part of his Herculean form, as Lydia was wont to designate his more than just proportions, and he made a strange and very unnecessary movement, with one leg, which she declared always made her fancy she saw a bear learning to dance on a hot floor—a cruel mode of tuition she had heard was not unfrequently practised on those poor show animals, that a kind heart grieves sometimes to see led about the streets. Then both hands were encased in a pair of bright-yellow shining gloves, which were evidently so tightly strained that they looked as if the next moment must behold them bursting; and it was

equally evident that these imprisoned fingers were anything but what the French call *effilés*. The cane, which one of those huge hands grasped, was a bad attempt at elegance, and his hat was a fashionable *outré*. His very marked plaid waistcoat was anything but well chosen, and only seemed to add to the vast breadth of his chest and shoulders; and there was an exuberance of chains, and pins, and studs about his upper man, which offended Lydia's eye to the greatest degree, and brought to her recollection some of the men she had seen serving in the great London shops, the few times in her young life that she had had the opportunity of beholding that race of beings. To crown the whole, his face, in spite of all her father had said as to its being considered handsome by some persons, was one in comparison with which many accounted decidedly plain would have been to her agreeable. The features were not actually bad, but they were large and blunt; and there was a floridness about his unluckily too fair complexion, and a roundness and pale blueness in his eyes, as well as a sandiness about the thick, stubble-like hair, which, when it came to whiskers, bordered on the red, that altogether proved a *tout ensemble* the very antipodes to all that Lydia was most inclined to admire in the superior sex—for so, I suppose, the masculine one *must* be called; yet, as Sir William had said, there were those who might have declared him to be a fine-looking man. Amongst farmers, probably, he might have ranked as a modern Antonous, but a handsome life-guardsman would, in point of looks, have beaten him “to an immortal smash,” to quote the words of Uncle Hoskyns, in that inimitable work, “Laurie Todd.”

He had been an only child, and regarded by his idolising parents as everything that was admirable, bodily and mentally, in consequence of the happy blindness that falls to the lot of the generality of fathers and mothers. And happy it is; for I am inclined to believe that, with respect to the faculty of sight—perhaps we should call it mental sight—parents seldom see quite clearly in any way; for, if they do see at all, they are not unapt to go into the other extreme, and view everything in an exaggerated light, which, when faults are in question, makes such *clairvoyance* eminently painful to themselves, as well as to those on whom it is exercised; but, after all, moderation is the rarest quality to be met with in the human character; and much, very much, of our misery in this world is owing to the want of it.

Mornington, naturally enough, in consequence of such parental adoration, had all his life been tolerably well satisfied with what he considered his many recommendations, until he became acquainted with his admired, and elegant Lydia; but there was

an air of high breeding about that young lady, accompanied at times by a quiet, penetrating glance of the eye, and an occasional half good-humored, half satirical smile, that had given him a novel and unpleasant feeling of doubt as to whether he really possessed the attractive qualifications which hitherto he had felt pretty secure had fallen to his lot. Yet she fascinated him all the while, notwithstanding this degree of fear, just as it is said the rattlesnake does when it fixes its bright eyes on the wonder-stricken bird that gazes and falls at once as its prey.

Lydia Middlemore had seen but little of the world; but she had such a natural refinement of taste, and also so much quick discernment of character, that she was enabled frequently, notwithstanding her slight experience, to perceive at once what a person really was, whilst she felt what he ought to be.

There are some few people born with a sensitiveness to everything, that makes them keenly alive to those shades and gradations of character, mind, manners, and beauty, that others would pass their lives without observing. Refinement, like the branching veins of a leaf, running through their whole being, and pervading every thought and feeling, gives them not only this quick perception, but makes them, like the sensitive plant, shrink back at the slightest approximation to anything of less delicacy than themselves. This quality may not bear to be defended, although there is that about it we may be tempted to admire; for should we, in this fleeting world through which we are so speedily passing to another, allow ourselves to be influenced by such comparative trifles, when there are *real* good and *real* evil to be thought of? The only thing to be said in defense of such sensitiveness is, that the individual who possesses it is likely to be equally susceptible to all that is good, and great, and admirable, in things of consequence, and also to hate what is mean and bad. So, having done my best to excuse over-refinement, I will leave it to its fate.

There was some degree of awkwardness in the first attempts at conversation on all sides; but luckily little Fanny was there with whom the lover had previously made acquaintance, and had noticed a good deal; and as the lively child wanted but little encouragement to make friends with him, she chatted and laughed away at such a rate, that the rest of the party quickly felt at ease; that is to say, as much as they could do with a lover coming upon trial, which, at all events, must be a peculiarly awkward business to the individual himself; although Mornington would perhaps not have felt it much, but for the degree of awe as well as admiration with which he regarded the fair Lydia. Sir William was more than usually slowly discursive in his con-

versation, being desirous to impress his hoped-for future son in-aw with the idea that he was a man of talent and information, as well as to encourage him to think that he himself was liked and approved of by the head of the house, however indifferent towards him, at present, might be the object of his choice. He therefore insinuated into his conversation sundry little flattering hints respecting the lover's various good qualities, or imaginary ones; for as yet Sir William knew little more of him than that he was what is called "a good sort of fellow," and a "respectable character;" and what volumes of dullness may not be bound up with such a common-place edition of the human species!

Lydia was unusually, but perhaps very excusably, silent; but Lady Middlemore and Louisa, after the romp, Fanny, had retired for the night, joined cheerfully and pleasantly in the general conversation, so that Mornington soon found himself perfectly comfortable; and as he could not contrive either to be near Lydia, or to devote himself to her altogether, he was forced to content himself with as many looks as so recent an acknowledgment of his devoted admiration would allow of, and also with praising the tea she made, which he pronounced to be the very best it had ever been his good fortune to taste; but unfortunately, perhaps to lengthen out his enjoyment, he slowly drank up his whole cupful with his teaspoon, sip after sip, in so sadly audible a manner, that the annoyed Lydia contracted her brow, and gave sundry glances from under her eyelids, at Louisa, the meaning of which the latter perfectly comprehended. But, such is the difference of opinion under different circumstances, that, had he been a favored lover. who knows whether even the fastidious Lydia might not have pronounced that mode of deglutition perfectly gentlemanly? for, generally speaking, a *favored* lover never does anything disagreeable for the first few weeks that he is received as such.

In short, after the first stiff quarter of an hour, there was no want of conversation. They talked of the weather—that invariable English topic; of the state of the expected crops; the neighborhood of Mr. Mornington's own estate, its fine timber, increasing value, &c., &c. Lydia could not accuse him of saying anything amiss, but yet could not perceive that he said a single word worth listening to; and she was not at all sorry when the first trial evening was ended, and readily gave him a farewell shake of the hand at his departure, although she had withheld the one of welcome upon his arrival; but she was so pleased to think he was going, that she felt quite in good humour with the poor man.

The hour came at last for the two sisters to retire to their room ; but Lydia could not find an opportunity that night of saying a word to her mother respecting Mr. Mornington's proposal, as Lady Middlemore never could find any spare time to dawdle agreeably with her daughters in their apartment, or her own, as one of Sir William's fancies was, that Lady Middlemore should never be out of bed more than five minutes after himself, as he had long taken it into his head that, gentle as she was, she disturbed him if she delayed longer.

Lady Middlemore was one of those wives who readily give up a multitude of trifling things, to ensure herself the power of having her own way. She even justly contended for it on important occasions ; and had found this method so successful, that although Sir William appeared to take the lead in all points, it was not in reality more the case than does the sovereign of our native land, unless sanctioned by her loyal subjects in the Houses of Lords and Commons ; and Lady Middlemore united the power and influence of both, as regarded all affairs of any consequence. He had a good opinion of his own abilities, yet in his secret mind a still greater one of hers ; but he took especial care to betray this conscious feeling of inferiority, as little as possible ; and as Lady Middlemore aided and abetted his evident wish that it should not be discovered, by the extreme mildness and unostentatiousness of her sway, very few persons had ever come at the actual truth—that she was in every sense of the word his better half, and governed himself, his house, and his belongings, as she wished.

Although Sir William's powers of falling asleep the moment he laid his head upon his downy pillow were altogether unrivalled, he for once kept himself awake during the short time he allowed Lady Middlemore, before placing herself in her own little nest ; so that, instead of a heavy breathing or a sonorous snore, she was greeted with—

“My dear, I wish to talk to you a little, if you please.”

“Certainly,” replied the complaisant wife, knowing beforehand everything he was about to utter, and who, unluckily, after rather a plaguing and exciting day, happened to be both tired and sleepy, and had been fondly hoping she would have found her husband's eyes closed for the night ; but she was not so fortunate. So he began, and with rather a loud voice, that the slight distance might not allow her to lose a word—

“My dear, I want to know what is your real opinion of Mr. Mornington's proposal for Lydia ? The inopportune visit of the Henleys has entirely prevented my having any communication with you on the subject during the day. You must be fully

aware how very desirable it is for us to have one at least of our elder daughters well settled in life; and although I should have been still better pleased if Mr. Mornington had selected Louisa, who is so nearly the age at which I think it most desirable for a woman to marry; yet, as he has preferred her younger sister, we must make the best of it, and live in hopes that Lydia on this very important occasion may not be, as is so often the case, altogether carried away by her too highly enthusiastic, not to say romantic notions, but be satisfied with Mornington as he is—a respectable, honorable man, with good, useful sense, a sufficient share of information, domestically inclined, affectionate and attentive, and desirous to make our Lydia a truly happy wife.”

“But,” replied Lady Middlemore, rubbing her eyes to discourage the drowsiness that was rapidly gaining upon her, “how can you tell that Mr. Mornington is all this?”

“Because,” said Sir William, rather perplexed by this home question, “unless one hears to the contrary, that is the average character of most men in his sphere of life; and I have heard him well spoken of.”

“But an average character,” replied the mother, “will never satisfy Lydia or make her happy, I am certain.”

“But, my dear, she is so little likely to meet with a decidedly superior one—how few people have met with such to begin with!—striking talents, great intellect—or have improved upon a good classical education, if they have had one. How few, even were she to meet with such, have fortune and situation in life such as we should desire for Lydia, combined with the mind she thinks so essential! So many advantages do not often meet in one person; at least, in our limited society, they are not likely to come within our grasp. If a man does unite so many recommendations, he then expects rank and fortune, and a thousand other wordly advantages, in the woman he intends to marry.” (This was one of the sorts of speeches not to be interrupted.) “How few such men, let me therefore add, would seek for a wife in our pretty but comparatively poor and unknown Lydia! How few opportunities, from circumstances over which we have not altogether much—perhaps any—control, has Lydia of going into the world to see or be seen?—or, if she had, is it likely, as I have already said, that a highly-gifted man, with talents, rank and fortune, would select so unimportant, though certainly so engaging, a girl as Lydia! All these circumstances, duly considered, and many more which I will not now enumerate, induce me to think it is most desirable we should do all in our power to encourage Lydia to take Mornington; unless, which is very improbable, we should in any way hear aught that could tend to lessen

the good opinion which I own I am enclined to form of him. You have naturally much influence over Lydia, probably" (he might have said certainly) "more than I have, as it is natural that, upon the whole, a mother should have more than a father; and I do hope, therefore, my dear Catherine," (he always made use of her Christian name with the preceding adjective when he intended to be affectionately impressive,) "that you will combat the inclination I plainly see she has to dismiss Mornington altogether, and let him have at least a fair trial; and I depend upon you not to say anything about him that may at all tend to confirm her present apparent dislike to him. I wrote to him this morning, and gave him every proper encouragement on my part, without compromising my daughter; in consequence of which he has this evening eagerly presented himself to our family circle; and I have given him *carte blanche* to visit us whenever he likes. However, I will to-morrow show you the letter I wrote, which, I flatter myself, you could not but approve, although, as you were necessarily engaged with your visitors, I could not consult you upon its propriety, as I did not wish to delay giving him the permission to come to us, as it were—though I do not like the expression "upon trial," for such it fairly is. Now tell me what you think, my dear."

Alas! "my dear" was fast asleep. The somewhat monotonous hum of her husband's voice had lulled her senses into temporary oblivion. But Sir William repeated more loudly, "My dear!" and the suddenly-aroused wife became aware of the misfortune that she had only heard part of the long address to her; so she murmured—

"What you say is all very right—very true. We will talk fully on the subject to-morrow. But are you aware, my dear William, that it must be getting on towards twelve o'clock? you know how much you dislike to be awake late."

Sir William struck his repeater. "Very true, my dear; I did not think it was so late. You are right: we will converse fully on the interesting subject to-morrow. Good night, my dear."

But Lady Middlemore could not echo back her good night: she was already fast asleep.

We must now fancy ourselves in the apartment of the two fair sisters: a comfortable and a spacious one, containing two little French beds, for which, many years ago, Lady Middlemore had turned out one of those awful four-posted ones so prevalent in English sleeping-rooms; these little beds having

merely the *ciel*, as it is termed by our elegant friends across the Channel, from which depended muslin curtains lined with pink—an appropriate and becoming shelter to youth and beauty. Each sister had her own particular side of the room; her small but pretty toilet-table, washing apparatus, and the nameless etceteras and appendages which constitute comfort in a lady's bedroom; and besides there was a tiny appartement out of it, with one large airy window, in at which peeped a splendid Japan honeysuckle, and a very beauteous jasmine, both of which grew against that side of the house, and caused a succession of sweets, to the great delight of the sisters. This they called their boudoir; and, to add to its charms, Lydia had recently coaxed her father, for coaxing was one of her talents, out of a new and delicious *chaise longue*. Here, too, were various little nicknacks and ornamental trifles: a few pots of choice greenhouse flowers; their respective books of devotional reading and prayers; a small book-case, containing some of Lydia's favorite poets. In short, though the little boudoir was crammed so full that there was not more than space enough left for the sisters to turn about in, yet it was their favorite part of the whole house. These two appartments had been given up to them entirely for the last four years of their young lives. The walls had not yet re-echoed much sentimental language, or any passionate lamentations. There had been few or no events of great importance discussed there: no heart-burnings, no jealousies, no quarrels, had polluted its peaceful atmosphere. The two sisters were thoroughly and fondly attached to each other, although so different in character and disposition. There might have been occasionally the momentary ebullition of irritation from the quick and sensitive Lydia, or the grave remonstrance and very sensible advice from the more sober-minded Louisa; but the kiss of peace invariable followed, and their placid though monotonous life had been, at all events, one of almost uninterrupted comfort and tranquil enjoyment in that bedroom and little boudoir.

We must now imagine we behold them, each in her snow-white dressing-gown, the only dress in which the real figure of woman is now to be ascertained: Lydia, seated in a low chair, a pretty tip of a foot in a worked slipper peeping from beneath the flowing drapery; thick tresses of her golden hair at that moment gathered up into one hand of the handsome Louisa, who, with the other, as she stood over her sister, was making good use of an ivory-handled brush, as was their wont alternately every night for each other; for no gossiping, prying, dawdling chattering lady's maid ever came near them night or morning.

or even at the time of the dinner toilet, or any toilet at all, except if a ball was in view, and then Lady Middlemore's own steady maid was allowed to lend her assistance.

We once heard a gentleman say, who had seen much of the world in general, and, we must suppose of the young ladies' world in particular, in a tragi-comical sort of a voice and manner, "Oh, you do not know how much of importance is said and settled—how much harm has been done to many a lover's cause at night by one sister, whilst she has been busy brushing the back hair of another!" Yes; back hair was the very epithet: a very true and expressive one it was, and brought at once before our mind's eye the luxuriant folds of long, thick hair that adorn many a young and finely-shaped female head; but whether back hair was altogether a sufficiently sentimental, poetical, or even euphonious epithet, for so interesting and pathetic a subject, I am not exactly certain. I rather think not; albeit the sayer of it was considered to be a very refined and elegant-minded personage, with a phraseology generally regarded as superior to that of the usual run of agreeable talkers: yet, as "back hair," is "back hair," perhaps I am hypercritical in surmising it not to be a very elegant expression. At all events, however, it is the true one. Whether his complaint was founded equally on truth—whether he spoke feelingly, and from painful experience of such a result, or only from hearsay from some intimate female friend who had imprudently revealed to him one of the many important secrets of the Gynæcium—we know not either. But as he was a man of the world—of worlds great and small, high and middling—for of the *low* he could not be supposed to know anything—we are bound to believe as a fact what may, after all, be known to all but to heroes or ignoramuses, as I fear I am, on such very nice and delicate feminalities.

However, in the present instance, he would at all events have been wrong had he ventured on such a conclusion; for the brusher of the moment, the beautiful Louisa, was not one of those who kill with a few hasty words, or who would have cut up a poor lover at a slash, unless she had known him to have been a Lovelace or any other *vaurien* of a hero, our readers may please to think of; for she was prudent and reflecting—cautious, yet kind. She always did to others as she would be done by, and, moreover, was never put out of sorts because a man happened to fall in love with a sister less pretty than herself. Moreover, she had the power—which few, either men or women, acquire to any great degree, of bridling her tongue; and not from the love of fun even, would she turn into ridicule any poor man because he did not happen to be a piece of perfection.

Lydia had come to the end of her account of the conversation in the study between her father and herself, and Louisa had gone on brushing very steadily, whilst Louisa ended by saying—

“Now, Louisa, you know it would be impossible for me to marry such a man as Mr. Mornington.”

“I think it very possible you could not, and yet very possible you could.”

“Oh, Louisa! I can’t bear such half-and-half sayings. Don’t you see with the glance of an eye that he is a most unattractive person?”

“I do not know, Lydia, what to say as to his being attractive; but I think him rather good-looking, as times go.”

“As times go!” repeated Lydia, with her peculiarly merry laugh. “If the times are so bad for men, then all I can say is, they are none of them for me. Why, his face is like a fine red apple, with a quantity of brown sugar at the top, for that is the precise color of his hair. I thought of the likeness the first time I saw him; and if you doubt it, only look at the sugar to-morrow when it is brought up with the children’s dinner. Then, for his figure, it is just what I could fancy a long, well-stuffed mattress would be, with an attempt to pinch it in, a little way down, to make believe a waist. Then, as for his hands—one would cover my whole head, and hide it too.”

“Nay, Lydia,” said her more reasonable sister, “you surely do not think a man’s exterior is the first thing to be considered—do you? If so, what would become of your favorite, Mr. Seton?”

“Oh! dear, old, clever Mr. Seton. What can his plainness signify? Has he not a pair of eyes that declare him at once to be all over genius? He can even afford to be plainer than he is, if he is so plain. But, really, when I sit listening to his delightful conversation, I quite forget his looks, except when struck by the keen expression of those eyes of his; but Mr. Mornington is too much of a yea-and-nay sort of person to afford to be plain; though plain, perhaps is not the true word. But he is worse: he looks anyhow—nohow; he has quite an unmeaning face; and, in my opinion, does not look at all like a gentleman.”

“I think you underrate his appearance, Lydia; but, at all events, I must say he looks the very picture of good-humor.”

“Oh Louisa! Louisa! that is the panegyric invariably pronounced by a charitable person, like yourself, on an unfortunate mortal in whom one can find nothing else to praise. Now, I really do not like such very good-humored-looking people; they usually look foolish.”

“Then perhaps you don’t like very good-humored people?”

"Yes—no—not people whose chief perfection, whose only perfection, perhaps it may be. Very sweet tempers, I do think, satiate one another. It is the eternal sunshine which, I have heard, where it preponderates, as it does in some countries, becomes most wearisome. I think I do like a short-lived tempest, or, at least, a few occasional clouds; for afterwards the sun appears indescribably enchanting."

"I think," said Louisa, somewhat gravely, "my Lydia is just now acting the part of portrait-painter to herself, and perhaps has taken her likeness with more truth than she has done that of her devoted admirer. What say you, dearest?"

"I say, Louisa, that you do not brush my hair as well as usual, with your frequent pauses and occasional jerks."

"And I say, Lydia, that as you do not attempt to controvert my accusation, I shall believe you secretly feel its truth. But, to return to Mr. Mornington: you really must be civil to him, at least for papa's sake. You have promised to see more of the poor man, and to see him without prejudice, if possible; and indeed, dear Lydia, I do not think it is a prudent habit, that of yours—pronouncing so quickly upon the character and dispositions of almost strangers, as you do."

"I know you are naturally quick, and have a good deal of discrimination of character; but think how few opportunities, at your age, you can have had of studying human nature and of observing its different shades of character, and above all, the many inconsistencies and contradictions which mamma always says make it so difficult to discover what a character really is, even to the keenest and most experienced observer."

"Well, Louisa, dear, all you say is most right and sensible; and I believe I must confess I am often enough very wrong and very silly; yet, for all that, depend upon it that I never shall like Mr. Mornington."

"Do you remember, Lydia, when we had been separated for years from our cousins by their long residence abroad—when they did return to England—what a dislike you took to Frederick; and that, notwithstanding, he shortly became your favorite amongst them all?"

"Very true. But then, though I did dislike him at first—disliked him far more than I do Mr. Mornington; for, after all, what I feel for him is a most hopeless indifference—yet it was easy to perceive that Frederick had at least what I ask for—something in him which it is evident enough Mr. Mornington has not."

"Well, as you are so determined that is to be the case, we will not dispute the point, especially as of course at present I cannot

prove to the contrary; but, at all events, *you* are bound to believe the poor man has good taste."

"Not at all," retorted Lydia; "if he had, he must have chosen yourself."

"Has not your penetration, then, discovered that the people generally prefer their contrasts, and——"

"Contrasts!" interrupted Lydia. "Yes, I trust I am one to Mr. Mornington; but surely, dearest Lou, you do not pay yourself so bad a compliment as to suppose there is any similarity between yourself and that gentleman?"

"Not any decided similarity, certainly," said Louisa, laughing; "but more than between you and him."

"Well, the end of all this is, that I must say, Louisa, I do not ever expect to marry. I could not marry any man I did not love and respect with all my heart and soul; and perhaps the man who could make me feel this would not care for me—and therefore the chances are that I shall die an old maid. And yet," she added, turning her head so quickly to look at her sister that the suddenness of the movement fairly knocked the brush out of Louisa's hand, "that would be very disagreeable."

"Do you think so?" said her sister, quietly, while stooping to pick up the brush.

"Why! do not you think so? It is not that I should care so much about being married myself, but that I should feel some shame at being single. People do so always laugh at unmarried women after they are no longer young, and seem to think they are unmarried because none were desirous about having them for wives."

"Oh!" said Louisa, gaily, "if that is all, we will placard it one of these days all over the country, that Mr. Mornington proposed to Miss Lydia Middlemore before she was twenty, and she refused him."

"Ah! that is all very well as a joke; but do you know, Lou, it may be—I fear it is—a weakness; but I have always felt that there is nothing I should find so hard to bear with equanimity as ridicule. I could stand being blamed, even undeservedly—perhaps neglected, though that would not be agreeable; but to be laughed at, that would be to me intolerable. And yet, Lydia, remember even a fool can ridicule; and I am inclined to believe it is often the silliest people who *do* indulge in laughing at and ridiculing persons and things for nothing at all."

"Yes, I know it, and that only makes it more provoking. The other day I felt quite in a rage with that silly Mrs D—— for laughing at my favorite story of "Undine," and declaring that anybody could have written such a one. Now, her very

silliness added tenfold to my vexation—I thought her so very presumptuous for advancing such an opinion.”

“And her very silliness prevented me from minding it in the least,” said Louisa.

“Still this is not a case altogether in point. I do think it a vexing thing, the sort of stigma cast upon unmarried women after a certain age. It does one harm beforehand ; it makes one fearful, or, what is worse, tolerably sure that the same obloquy may one day be her portion ; gives rise to cold, calculating cares, and to feelings and anxieties that, when one really considers them, seem quite beneath one—beneath the proper dignity of woman to give in to ; and yet goes on, and——” Lydia paused and sighed.

“Nay, Lydia. I do not think you need at present accuse yourself of ‘cold’ calculating cares, when you are anxious to get rid of an admirer with such a fortune as that of Mr. Mornington.”

“Oh !” said Lydia, resuming her vivacity, whilst her feelings of self-reproach passed away, “I am not so bad as that either. I certainly wish to believe I shall be married one of these days ; yet I would sooner stand that horrid thing, ridicule, than marry a man I could not love or look up to.”

“While you feel thus, and act in consequence of such feelings, you need not reproach yourself for any wish eventually to be married, which I have little doubt most girls cherish secretly, when not honest enough to confess it ; yet I agree with you, that it is beneath a right-minded woman to be over-anxious on the subject, and I know that it is my mother’s opinion. She never seems to be the least anxious to get rid of her daughters.”

“I am quite sure, Louisa, I know exactly what mamma thinks of Mr. Mornington, although we have not yet been able to exchange one word upon the subject. I am certain she sees him in the same light as I do. Why, Louisa, you have quite left off brushing my hair !”

“Indeed, Lydia, I believe I had forgotten my occupation in the interest of our conversation ; but now I think we had better cease talking, as well as brushing, for to-night at least ; for it is, I know, quite late, and you will have an excuse for not getting up at the right hour. But pray, the next time Mr. Mornington comes, do talk to him a little more than you have done this evening, or my father will not be pleased.”

“Well,” answered Lydia, playfully, yet affectionately, kissing her adviser’s cheek, “perhaps I will, if he does not make such an odious noise sipping his never-ending tea.”

Louisa shook her head with a half smile. They then finished their preparations for the night, gave themselves for a time, with

pure, unsullied hearts, to their devotions, and were no sooner in their beds than they were asleep ; and each passed a refreshing night without dreaming of the Lover upon Trial.

It must not be supposed that, because Lady Middlemore fell asleep in the midst of her husband's long speech about their daughter's present and future prospects, or because she did not lie awake even during the time that her fair daughters spent in talking of the orders of the day, she was an indifferent or a careless mother. No : she was as devoted a parent as she was a wife : perhaps still more so ; for certainly, though her actions were as much conducive to her husband's comfort as they were to that of her children, her thoughts were decidedly more engrossed by the latter than by the former. Her mind was, as it were, almost always with them, even when there was not the slightest appearance of its being occupied about them ; but she was that description of person who saw into things at once, and made up her mind accordingly. There was seldom any uncertainty or indecision about her, either in thought, word, or deed. She now felt at once tolerably certain that Mr. Mornington, from what she had already seen of him, was the last man in the world likely to succeed with such a girl as Lydia ; and although, with a mother's natural pride, she had been gratified by his proposal, yet she had no feeling, no wish beyond it, but that which was impossible to be fulfilled ; namely, that Mornington *had* been worthy of the child, who, perhaps, though almost unknown to herself, might be her favorite and her chief pride—for if a mother may be permitted such a feeling, Lydia was a daughter to be proud of. Lady Middlemore had, in consequence of her husband's express desire, fully made up her mind not to influence Lydia's determination ; but this feeling of duty caused her no regret ; for she felt quite certain that none of the pomps and vanities of life, however enticing they might be in the abstract, would weigh with Lydia in the important choice of a husband ; and unless Mornington came forth, upon acquaintance, in a very different point of view from what she had reason to expect, Lady Middlemore felt convinced Lydia would never become his wife.

To see Lydia one day happily, really happily married, was the secret, but almost first wish of her maternal heart—certainly her first worldly wish, for that darling child, from her peculiar disposition, caused a good deal of anxiety to the mother's watchful and discerning mind. There was that about Lydia's character far less fitted to encounter the difficulties, the trials, nay, even the monotonies of life—to some the greatest trial of all—than would be the steadier disposition of her elder sister. There

was a degree of talent and enthusiasm about Lydia, occasioning a species of restless impetuosity that Lady Middlemore feared might ultimately make her feel discontented with the very "even tenor" of her life ; for, to some characters, the stimulus of variety and excitement seems essential to their well-being. Lydia would have too much good principle to give way to or show this discontent, if it should come upon her ; but the concealed feeling would be equally painful, and might eventually militate against all real enjoyment ; and that her children should, really and truly be happy was the earnest wish of that mother. There was also in Lydia the extreme of refinement already alluded to, that disinclined her to be easily pleased or satisfied with the many ; and there were deep and strong affections in her nature, that, if ever greatly excited, might, under untoward circumstances, occasion her acute misery. But Lady Middlemore shut up all these anxieties within her own breast. Her husband, with much of real affection for his daughters, would not have understood or entered into this nice discrimination of their characters ; very few fathers do. There is a discerning penetration in the mind of a really watchful and anxious mother, which enables her to discover more at one glance of what is going on in her children's feelings, minds, and dispositions, than most fathers probably would find out in years. This is the reason why fathers experience more real, or at least more unmixed, pleasure in their children, particularly in their daughters, than more tenderly loving mothers can ; and the father sees all the charms, all the loveliness, all the attractions ; but he is not ever, with painful watchfulness, lifting up, though unobservedly, the folds of the shining curtain to ascertain what may be going on beneath it. Sir William thought both his elder daughters perfect, with the exception of what he called Lydia's too great enthusiasm and too little method.

The following morning, after her night of sound and refreshing sleep, Lydia darted into her mother's dressing room, looking very much like an opening flower on which the early dew had just fallen ; and after fondly embracing her, she sat herself down in an inviting arm chair, whilst Lady Middlemore was finishing her toilet.

"Mamma," exclaimed the eager girl, "I am delighted to find you think just exactly as I do of Mr. Mornington."

"Pray," Lydia, how can you tell that ? I have never yet been able to exchange one word with you upon the subject."

"Oh mama !" replied her daughter, laughing, "you know my

infallible means of judging. I merely consult your eyes, and I am seldom or never wrong."

Lady Middlemore thought how much she was in the habit of judging of her daughter's thoughts through the same medium, and how great a similarity there was naturally in their characters, though time and circumstances had modified and subdued her own.

"And so, mamma," continued Lydia, "your eyes declared in the study yesterday morning that you quite agreed with me."

"Really, Lydia, I scarcely raised my eyes from my knitting the whole time your father was talking to you; so, unless you were in a sort of *clairvoyant* state, I can hardly tell how you could discover what was passing in my mind, unless the expression of my eyes pierces through their lids. But never mind: all I have to say is this—that your father depends upon your promise of allowing Mr. Mornington to see you frequently; and that being the case, I am sure you are too well-bred, and also too kind-hearted to cause the poor man to feel any more awkwardness than necessarily must be entailed upon him by his present trying situation."

And here Lydia certainly saw reflected in the glass an ill-repressed smile upon her mother's lips.

"Now, mamma, do you know that I think a man shows a little delicacy of mind who goes to work as Mr. Mornington has done? His speaking to papa first of all, and then coming as he does upon sufferance—to be looked at, listened to, meditated upon—would be insupportable to what I call a well-conditioned person, a man of any real feeling—any refinement, in short."

"Ah! that refinement!" thought Lady Middlemore, to herself; then added aloud, "I have, however, known similar cases, my dear child, which have terminated in happy marriages. The same thing exactly occurred to a friend of my youth, and she has lived for many long years a contented and happy wife."

Lady Middlemore did not speak out one thought, which was, "But she was not like my Lydia."

"Well, mamma, I do not understand this sort of thing. Mr. Mornington is a near neighbor; the summer is coming on, which, he says, he intends to pass at Highwood: what was to prevent his taking the whole thing quietly, seeing more of me, and giving me time to see more of him? unless" (she wickedly added) "*he* found, poor man! that I was likely to be against him, for *I* certainly have. But if he had so done, then all might have gone on—or rather, I should say, gone off, which I am sure it will—easily, and without any sort of awkwardness being entailed either upon himself or us."

"My dear Lydia, I cannot pretend to account for the variety of proceedings that emanate from the various characters of various individuals. No two people act, think, or feel exactly alike; if they did, this terrestrial globe of ours would become a by-line-and-by-rule world, that you, of all people, would find rather insipid, I imagine. I must, therefore, only suppose that Mr. Mornington regards you as sufficiently charming to induce him to ask your father for the refusal of your hand, as we say of a house, or any other thing we are anxious to secure, and of which we fear another may slip in and take possession."

"Not much fear of my being caught up so suddenly in our quiet part of the world, dear mother," said the daughter, gaily; "but——"

Here the breakfast bell pealed away. Lady Middlemore put the finishing stroke to her toilet, and taking her beloved child's arm affectionately, they lost not a moment in joining the family party, who were already assembled.

Is not there something truly delightful in an English family breakfast in the country—in a pretty room, with windows opening to a lawn, on a lovely morning towards the end of the month of May?—not one of our own too frequently half-starved Mays, when blazing fires are still necessary, and remind us that Winter has scarcely yet relinquished his grasp of our little island; but a warm, sunny, soft, perfume-breathing May, shining and glancing with its coronet of flowers and leaves, without anything to remind one even that there ever has existed such a crabbed, wrinkled, frozen sort of a monster as Winter. Add to this open-windowed breakfast-room a velvet lawn, almost uniting with the soft carpet inside the apartment in question; a lattice-work verandah, not too much enclosed or too forward to keep out the precious Sun, who with us is all too chary of his beams, but so entwined with clematis and other lovely creepers, playing at bo-peep with one another, as to create a sufficient and agreeable shade beneath, whilst pots of geraniums and other greenhouse plants are grouped here and there, so as to form clusters of charms; some fine timber-trees, shading the distance, and lilacs, laburnums, and snowballed guelder-roses smiling at you close by. Then at the table the father, in his exclusive arm-chair, his glasses by his side, ready to attack his newspaper or his letters when they arrive; the eldest daughter, a regular beauty, presiding at the tea-table; the next sister, still more engaging and elegant, attending to her father's and mother's wants; both of them set off by that freshness and neatness of dress that generally distinguishes the attire of the English gentlewoman, even at that early hour—the mother watching over the childish freaks

of some younger and lively darling, while the sister, neither child nor woman, shy everywhere else, is happy and at ease amongst those so justly dear to one another. Add all these attractions together, and you may imagine the breakfast table of the Grange on that May morning.

Breakfast went merrily on, when the door opened, and Sir William mechanically extended his hand without looking round, as about to receive his paper, and perhaps letters, when, instead of either, the post not being yet arrived, the servant brought in two baskets—one containing a variety of superb and rare greenhouse flowers; and another, in which, carefully supported by the most vividly green and luxuriant moss, lay a branch bearing four or five magnificent trumpet-shaped blossoms of the white perfumed datura, which Lydia happened the preceding evening to say she had never beheld, and wished much to see.

They came with Mr. Mornington's compliments to Miss Middlemore and Miss Lydia Middlemore, and a message to Sir William, which purported that he was going to drive to C—— that afternoon; and as he had heard Sir William say overnight that he and some of the ladies were also going there, if he would allow him to join them, perhaps one of their party would find it convenient to go with him in his phaeton.

Sir William, giving a pleased glance at Lydia, desired the servant to say he hoped Mr. Mornington would have luncheon with them, and afterwards they would set out together.

Fanny, enchanted with the magnificent assemblage of flowers, far surpassing those of their own pretty, but small greenhouse, and especially with the beautiful datura blossoms, began to handle them so eager and so roughly, while she lavished all sorts of endearing epithets upon the absent lover, that Lady Middlemore despatched her and her sister Flora to the school-room, to prepare their daily lessons before they were joined by their two elder sisters, who always devoted to them that part of the morning which preceded their early dinner.

"Well, my dear Lydia," said Sir William, opening and rubbing his glasses, whilst he now awaited without any impatience the delayed arrival of his darling newspaper, "I call this a very pretty and a very delicate attention; for you must observe, that although Mornington particularly attended to your taste and wishes, by sending you that superb branch of datura, yet, not to distress your sensitiveness by a too-exclusive mark of his preference and his admiration, he sent that beautiful nosegay at the same time to Louisa, that she might appear to have an equal share in his attentions. Now, I maintain that no common-minded man would have thought of such a proceeding. He is evidently

fearful of annoying you at first by too openly declared admiration, and thus begins showing it by degrees. I must say, I give Mornington credit for this thoughtfulness: it shows he considers your feelings more than his own."

And Sir William flattered himself this was a proposition that not only could not be refuted, but one which must have great weight with Lydia.

But he was rather disappointed by her reply, which was—

"Why, that is a thing of course, dear father, I should imagine," looking at the same time, however, with intense admiration at the beautiful flowers which still rested on their bed of moss; for Lydia had almost a passion for flowers, and was a very good botanist.

"By no means 'of course,' Lydia, I am sorry to say; for I have too much candor not to confess a truth, although it is one that tells against my own sex; but I do grieve to say that many—I should, perhaps, with some correctness say, the majority of men—are too apt—too much in the habit of consulting—rather considering—their own wishes, more than those—I mean, to the exclusion of those of others. Yes, Lydia; and although you smile, and I know what that smile means—even while they are prosecuting their—rather, I should say, endeavoring to gain the good opinion—nay, more, the heart—of the woman of their choice—selfishness is, I fear, the foible—nay, did I speak with perfect veracity, I should term it the fault—for it is more than foible—of our sex, and is—allow me, my dear Lydia, to say—to assure you—at least in my humble opinion—the consequence—the result, rather—of the peculiar circumstances under which men—I should say boys—are generally educated—brought up—at school. At their various places of education, they are early used—accustomed to—or rather—induced by the system of fagging—that species of tyranny from elder boys—to think how they in turn can best obtain—ensure—their own comfort and well-being—or if that, as is often the case at first, is impossible, they then make up for it—more properly speaking, console themselves—by anticipating in idea the happy time—the happy future—when they themselves, in their turn, will be able—will have it in their power—to do what they like, and live more, perhaps, entirely for themselves, and to sacrifice the feelings of others to their own enjoyments."

"Not but what," he continued, after a moment's pause to recruit himself, "I must add a few words in defence—in justification, rather—of that system of education I may have appeared to you to condemn—at least by implication. Public schools I admire; nay, I venerate public schools. They turn out—they

send forth into the turmoil of our busy world many—nay, most of the great, and more than great—the splendid characters who adorn—embellish—the pages of the historian; nay, probably, that historian himself—our chief poets, orators, statesmen—our prime ministers, who, Atlas-like, bear almost the burthen of a world upon their shoulders—have been brought up, have received their brilliant educations, have had their latent talents called forth, and—and—strengthened—matured in those valuable and admirable nurseries of youthful intellect. Was not Sir R. P. a Harrow boy? Was it not from thence that issued—that burst upon the admiring world like a meteor—the poet Byron? Did not the Duke ——?”

But here, fortunately for his patient listeners, the door opened once more, and the newspaper and half-a-dozen letters—thanks, or no thanks, to these one-penny post times—were delivered into the extended hands of the hitherto persevering orator, whose stream of eloquence from the datura blossoms had slowly meandered down to “the Duke”—we suppose “the Duke,” *par excellence*; but as the great name did not pass his lips, we must be satisfied with supposing it, as his auditors were at having lost the finishing part of his sentence—*rather*, as Sir William would have perhaps called it, the climax.

Sir William, with his newspaper and his letters, started at once for his study; Lady Middlemore, as was her custom, retired for a short time to attend to domestic concerns; and ordering her husband's dinner was not altogether without its small anxieties; whilst the two elder sisters repaired for a few minutes to the drawing-room to arrange their lovely flowers in the vases, before they gave themselves up to their young pupils in the school-room.

Louisa, before placing the love-offering in water, brushed the blossoms gently; then, playfully putting her fingers on her sister's eyelids, laughingly said—

“Do you know, Lydia, this flower has the property attributed by Oberon, in your favorite ‘Midsummer Night's Dream,’ to the flower there called ‘love-in-idleness:’—

The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make a man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.”

But this datura has a double privilege, for it succeeds as well with waking eyelids. So I shall repeat the operation just before Mr. Mornington arrives, remember.”

“And do you remember, silly girl,” said Lydia, laughing, “that, datura or no datura, I will not drive with him to C——

to day, if I can avoid it ; at least, certainly not both going and coming ; so I shall set off with papa in our pony carriage, recollect ; and I am quite sure that, however papa might prefer seeing me in the phaeton, if I at once jump into our carriage, which I shall do before any arrangements can be made, he has far too much delicacy of feeling to make me jump out again."

"Well, dear Lydia, all I can say is, take care not to vex papa ; you would be sorry afterwards."

Mr. Mornington sent word that he should not be able to have luncheon at the Grange, but would be with them at the hour they proposed setting off, which was to be at two, and he was so exactly punctual to that hour that it caused a feeling of actual admiration for him in Sir William's mind ; for he forgot the probable cause of his great punctuality. The Lover on Trial drove up to the door in one of the most perfect of low phaetons, drawn by two equally perfect steeds, and a groom in attendance, upon a horse quite as handsome as those his master was to drive. Sir William's simple pony carriage, although in the best possible style and taste, and looking perfectly gentlemanlike, was as nothing compared to Mornington's "turn-out," to use the ordinary phrase ; and the fair Lydia certainly felt that it would be a most agreeable thing to have always such an equipage at her command ; but in that case she must also have its owner. Then there came a sigh, and as sudden a preference for their own unpretending carriage, into which, before the methodical Sir William had found time to make any arrangements, or that Mr. Mornington had summoned up courage enough to propose the one he wished, Lydia lightly sprang, and, gathering up the reins, she told her father gaily she would have the honor of driving him ; whilst the pet Fanny, who had long been promised this pleasure, scrambled up into the seat behind, and Sir William, although secretly disconcerted and looking somewhat grave, had nothing to do but seat himself quietly by his lively, and as he secretly then termed her, wilful daughter ; whilst the still more disappointed lover, with not the best grace in the world, requested Louisa, who was rather inclined to smile at the whole business, would take the place in his phaeton, which he had fondly hoped would have been occupied by her rebellious sister. Lady Middlemore and Flora remained at home.

How frequently are expected pleasures turned into actual pains, or at least have so much alloy in them, that pleasures they can scarcely be termed ! It is strange that there should always seem so much requisite to satisfy completely the hearts and minds of poor human nature ; and yet it is wisely so ordained, otherwise some few of us would be too much in love with this our short-

lived passage from one world to another. However, in spite of the alloy to the pleasure Mornington had anticipated, his disappointment certainly was not irreparable, or even to be taken very much to heart ; for it occurred to him, and the idea was very soothing, that Lydia's withdrawal might proceed from a feeling of delicacy more than from any peculiar disinclination to be his companion in the phaeton. So, as he was, luckily for his own comfort, not one of the over-sensitive class, he went off cheerfully enough, hoping that on his return the charmer would relent in his favor.

The pony carriage took the lead, and Mr. Mornington, who had been very full of his new and fine horses, which, he had flattered himself, would have been much admired by Lydia, was now so much occupied in watching her own perfect and easy manner of driving—passing skilfully and fearlessly two or three rude and ponderous carts charged with enormous logs of wood, in a narrow and hedge-embosomed lane—that he for a time quite forgot that he had a fair, though not *the* fair, lady by his side, to whom he ought to make the agreeable. But at last, as one horse will not go so fast as two, especially two such as were now close behind her, and seemed to be getting rather fidgety at not being allowed to pass, Lydia drew a little aside, to allow the phaeton to go on before ; and then, but not till then, did the fascinated man find it possible to talk to his companion, albeit she was Lydia's sister, and certainly one of the chief belles in the county of W——.

Louisa was one of those who make the best of everything and everybody. She was always ready to be amused and pleased, and on the alert to gather any little information that her companion of the hour was capable of giving ; and thus she not only made others at ease and pleased with herself—and, what is more, with themselves—but really gained in a quiet way a good deal of useful and agreeable knowledge. Not so the quieter and more clever Lydia : she was inclined to dwell principally on a few very favorite subjects, while some others were to her peculiarly *ennuyant*, or at least thoroughly indifferent, perhaps because she had heard them originally treated badly or dully ; and although she was too well bred, and, what is far better, too kind-hearted, voluntarily to betray these feelings, yet she could not show the same interest her sister did, because she did not feel it. Lydia was an indifferent actress : and, though she would force herself by monosyllables, short sentences—yesses or noes—occasional bends of the head, or fixings of her bright eyes with apparent attention on her talking, but, too probably, uninteresting companion, she not unfrequently found herself at last in a perfect maze,

so unconscious was she of nearly the whole subject of the discourse to which she had been vainly attempting to listen ; and she often wondered how she managed to get out of her difficulties, and to prevent her unfortunate companion from becoming painfully aware how lost she had been to almost all that had been uttered. Still, although she might succeed in passing for a good listener, yet such indifference prevented any real spirit in the conversation ; and Lydia would have been much better off herself had she acquired the habit of taking even some little interest in topics that need not be disdained, although they did not happen to be those she peculiarly delighted in.

In consequence, therefore, of Louisa's different manner, her drive proved very fairly pleasant. She turned the conversation on a subject certain to be interesting to her companion—namely, Highwood Park and the surrounding property ; and she soon saw, that although he had only recently taken possession of it, and had known hitherto little about it, as his father, almost immediately upon purchasing it, had been obliged on account of bad health to live in Italy with his family, yet he seemed to have lost no time in making himself perfectly acquainted with its real value and various capabilities ; and it was also evident that he superintended and attended to every thing himself, and took great interest in the occupation.

All this the kind and judicious Louisa thought was much in his favor. He had, he told her, been cutting down some old timber here and there, and planting a number of young trees, and he mentioned several works on trees and on planting that he had been consulting. Altogether, she found herself becoming quite interested both in his conversation and in his plans, and could not help regretting that, had Lydia been in her place, not being predisposed in poor Mornington's favor, she would have listened in an absent manner, and experienced only *ennui*, when she herself had found amusement, and gained information.

When they arrived at the county town, Lydia was set down at the house of Dr. Lennard, who had long been their family physician ; and his wife was such an especial favorite of Lydia's that she took every opportunity of seeing her. The rest of the party were going to visit a manufactory newly established just out of the town, that was worked by steam ; and Fanny, who was a very inquisitive and intelligent child, had so tormented her father to let her see it, that he had consented to take her, although quite certain that the sight would be conducive neither to her pleasure nor her profit. But Fanny was rather apt to have her way with her father, although he would on no account have admitted that to be the case. Mr. Mornington,

who had engaged to accompany them, was again disappointed to find Lydia was not going; but he was obliged to make the best of it, and accordingly, placing himself with almost a sigh beside Louisa, they all proceeded to the manufactory.

As for poor Fanny, she, like many a wiser and older person, learnt by painful experience that what she had altogether disbelieved was but too true, and that all she saw and heard was as much as Greek and Hebrew to her. Her brains were perfectly bewildered; the noise of the machinery was such, that she could scarcely hear a word of explanation of all that was going on; and if she had, she would not have comprehended it; for, even to grown-up and clever people, it is often most difficult to understand similar explanations, unless they have some little previous knowledge of the subject in question, or of the principles of mechanism where machinery is concerned. Sir William had a good deal of knowledge in that line, and the quiet but observant Louisa inherited her father's taste; so they were both interested, and comprehended a good deal of what they saw. But as for poor Mornington, it was at first a perfect enigma to him, and yet he gave his decided attention to what was going on; and to Louisa's watchful eye—watchful on her sister's account—it was evident that he was not so wanting in abilities as her more fastidious sister fancied; for he asked questions that proved he had seized a part, though by no means the whole, and made remarks that showed he was not altogether an uninterested spectator. Then he was so good-natured to poor, disappointed Fanny, lifting her up in his arms when she wanted to see what was too high for her eyes to reach, and endeavoring to point out what he thought might interest her when her small stock of patience began, which it soon did, to give way, that both Louisa and her father had a more favorable impression left on their minds by the Lover upon Trial, in consequence of this morning's intercourse, than either of them, had they owned the truth, had altogether expected.

In the meantime, Lydia had been conversing with her favorite and very clever Mrs. Lennard upon some of their most chosen subjects, and they were by no means light ones. Mrs. Lennard, although totally devoid of pretension and free from all conceit, was a great reader and a deep thinker, and had much more real mind and talent than many women who had the reputation for greater powers. She was a studier of the human mind and heart, and had early appreciated the innate superiority of character in her very young friend, and perhaps was particularly attracted to her by discovering that she had a taste, though of course a very unripened one, for most of her own favorite pursuits. She

delighted, therefore, in bringing out her mental powers, directing her tastes, and strengthening her judgment, as well as in conversing with her on the books she herself read and the thoughts they excited in her own strong and original mind, lending also many works, for Lydia's perusal, that most young ladies would have shrunk from with affright. Not so Lydia. Notwithstanding her extreme liveliness and vivacity, she delighted to be made to think—to read what gave her new ideas; and her only drawback to the enjoyment was the thought, that she might perhaps be laughed at for perusing works whose contents even such a clever person as Mrs. Lennard sometimes found difficulty in mastering. Sir William was no friend to deep reading for women; but he was not prejudiced enough, or if he were he loved his daughter too well to deprive her of a pleasure which, unless it tended to give her an undue confidence in her own abilities, could do her no harm, if it did her no good; for he knew Mrs. Lennard sufficiently to feel secure she would never allow Lydia to read any work, however clever, that was blended—as clever works, alas! sometimes are—with ideas approaching to scepticism, or even a slighting of moral and religious principle. So Lydia read on; and though her intellect became expanded and strengthened, and her judgment rapidly improved, this style of reading and frequent intercourse with her superior friend perhaps added fuel to the flame of her naturally over-refined taste and fastidious feelings; for certainly, after two or three days passed with Mrs. Lennard, which was the greatest enjoyment of her rather monotonous existence, or, as now, a couple of hours of uninterrupted colloquy with her, Lydia too frequently found common, every-day conversation insipid and tedious; and had poor Mornington been aware of this, it would have been good policy on his part to have avoided asking her to return home with him that evening; but he was in total ignorance on that point.

The party, after leaving the manufactory, called for Lydia, and then proceeded to the hotel where the carriages and horses had been put up, and found a collection of ices and fruit, which, notwithstanding a previous luncheon, it was not possible to resist. Sir William sent sundry glances and half smiles towards Lydia, anxious to impress her mind with the lover's series of attentions, whilst he, poor soul! was delighted to hear her declare that the two sorts of ices ordered, happened to be her especial favorites. They were to return home by a prettier and rather longer road than that which they came, the proposal proceeded from the lover, and being acceded to by the father; and thus Lydia found she would have two miles farther to drive in company with Mornington than had she gone with him at first; for though she

was preparing to make arrangements to return in the same way as she came, Sir William's contracting brow plainly showed her that must not be ; so she accordingly consented, with a tolerably good grace, to Mr. Mornington's request that he might have the pleasure of driving Miss Lydia Middlemore home.

Alas for poor Mornington ! Had he been but half, nay a quarter of a Romeo, half a St. Preux, or half of any of the thousand poetical or prosaical heroes we have all so often read of, he must have succeeded with Lydia this lovely-looking evening. Had he possessed even a pair of deep-set, lustrous, darkly-fringed, liquid eyes, whether of the order of the violet, the hazel, or the jet ; had he owned one of those pale or interestingly sallow complexions that tell of an unhappy past and a probably agonizing future ; had he been favored with one of those slight, aristocratic (the everlasting epithet), commanding figures, with that elegant length of limb that seems endless ; or could he have breathed out his words in that deeply melodious, impassioned voice which thrills through the lady-listener's ear until it reaches her heart, passing into it with railroad speed ; or had he, even without one of these essentially lover-like recommendations, been capable of discoursing eloquent things, and thus contrived

To take the prison'd soul
And lap it in Elysium,

Mr. Mornington, happy man ! must have returned to Highwood Park with strong hopes, if not with quite a firm conviction that the fair one's feelings had been touched. But, alas for him ! not one of the these attractions fell to his lot ; and it was most unfortunate for so matter-of-fact a being that his attempts at conversation should succeed that of so really gifted a person as was Mrs. Lennard, and continue at intervals to sound in her uninterested ear, as she drove through a country of surpassing beauty and on such an evening ; for it was a perfect one : everything in nature felt and looked soft, and lovely, and smiling. A southwest breeze, just sufficient to waft, ever and anon, Lydia's long, waving curls towards the face of her admirer, was impregnated with the fragrance of grass, leaves, and, above all, of the wild honeysuckles, which grew in quantities in the lanes and copses through which their road led them, and which, in consequence of the unusually mild weather, had rather prematurely appeared.

Mr. Mornington was in the midst of what he flattered himself to be a tolerably agreeable sort of conversation, for he was talking of the charms of Highwood and its neighborhood, in which catalogue the Grange stood first and foremost, when—oh, surprise !—Lydia softly touched his arm.

"Stop, Mr. Mornington! Stop one moment!"

He pulled up immediately.

"Oh! I must gather some of those wild honeysuckles; we have none blown yet in our garden, and I am so fond of them!" And out she jumped, without waiting either for lover or groom to tender his assistance.

Out jumped Mornington after her, though by no means so lightly; and out jumped Fanny from the pony carriage, which had come up with them, and had made a dead stop to inquire the cause of theirs, which, notwithstanding all Sir William's earnest wish to befriend the lover, rather annoyed him, as, having consulted his perfect repeater, he found that by going even at a brisk pace they could scarcely reach home in time for dinner, although it had been ordered an hour and a-half later than usual, to give them ample time for all they had to do and see.

But Sir William, as has been said, was a martyr to punctuality, and, besides, Mr. Mornington was to eat his first family dinner with them; and Sir William wished his hoped-for son-in-law to see that his family dinners were as perfect in their way as were his company ones. And there was to be a small leg of mutton—of particularly fine mutton—not weighing an atom more than seven pounds; for beyond that weight such a joint was never admitted to Sir William's table. By his particular directions, his cook always roasted by the clock, in the very exact proportion of time to weight. What that proportion is, we suppose all our readers who may be *tant soit peu gourmand* will know. But already, alas! Lydia was far away, Fanny alongside of her, and Mornington in attendance, gathering handfuls of honeysuckles.

Sir William contemplated these proceedings, which threatened such a destructive delay of his dinner, with feelings of annoyance, but with forced patience. He did not know but what good might come of the apparent evil: that is to say, to the lover—certainly not to his dinner; and he remained, watch in hand, tolerably resigned to his fate, until he beheld Fanny scampering off to a great distance as fast as she possibly could run, and Fanny was a very lapwing as to swiftness.

"Now, can you fancy anything so wild and thoughtless as Fanny?" said Sir William to Louisa, who, except for her father's sake, sat perfectly unconcerned as to whether she dined at ten o'clock at night or not at all, after her second luncheon, and was contemplating the lovely scenery—her attention, however, being taken off a little by her impatient father and Mr. Mornington's impatient horses, who were pawing the ground, and whisking about their heads and tails, as if desirous to set off again.

"There now, Louisa! that child is actually out of sight, and there is Mornington gone in quest of her: indeed she is becoming too great a madcap; and Lydia, who *has* a watch, ought to know how late it is getting. We still have a good hour and a quarter's drive home, and it only wants an hour and twenty minutes to dinner. It will be quite spoilt: if there is anything detestable, it is an over-done leg of mutton."

"Do not fear, papa," said the ever-comforting Louisa; "you know how well Clark always manages to keep things back, as she calls it. Mamma says it is one of her perfections. I dare say Mr. Mornington has not a cook that can roast better than Clark. Do not you remember one day last year, when you had that fine haunch of venison, that some of the company came so late that you felt sure it would be spoiled? and yet Colonel Johnson, who is such a judge of good eating, said he had never tasted so fine a haunch of venison, or one so perfectly dressed."

"Very true, Louisa," said Sir William, comforted enough to be about consigning his repeater to his waistcoat-pocket, when all at once his hand seemed to be arrested. "Why, there is Lydia actually going after them both!" and his anxious eyes again rested on his watch; but Lydia, who had begun to recollect that there was a certain papa of the party, now turned about and walked briskly towards them, loaded with her perfumed treasures; and, putting them carefully into the phaeton, bounded into it with the lightness of a sylph, nodding to her father, who held his watch towards her, whilst she called out, "Plenty of time, papa; but why did you wait for us? We drive so much faster, we should have overtaken you in no time."

Strange! but this was a sudden *trait de lumiere* to the anxious Sir William; for the idea had never occurred to him, or even to the usually thoughtful Louisa; but now that Lydia had put it into his head, he consigned his watch to its usual place, gathered up the reins, and was quickly off, with some faint hopes that his mutton might yet be properly kept back so as to be fit to eat.

In five minutes' time the wild Fanny, having been caught and dragged back by Mornington, as she laughed and struggled, was popped into the phaeton between Lydia and her lover, as the pony carriage, in which had been the wild little girl's seat, had gone off without her; and thus Lydia was unexpectedly and agreeable saved a *tête-à-tête* the rest of her drive home; and Fanny, whose spirits had risen to an uncontrollable pitch, continued laughing and talking so incessantly, first to her sister and then to Mr. Mornington, pelting them both occasionally with honey-suckles, that he, poor man! gave up all hope of any comfortable conversation with the fair Lydia.

They drove so quickly that they soon overtook the pony carriage; and Sir William and Louisa, looking round, saw that Lydia and Fanny apparently were decidedly engrossed by one another; at which discovery Sir William slightly shrugged his shoulders, and Louisa thought, "It is not to be—that is pretty plain."

No: in spite of that beauteous evening—an evening that actually seemed cut out for love-making—poor Mr. Mornington had not had a quarter of an hour's real conversation with the lively Lydia—and most lively she was; for, although she had just before been discussing some grave subjects with her friend Mrs. Lennard, Lydia's versatility of character was such, and her tastes, in many respects were so simple and child-like, that she was full of delight at the exquisite beauty of the evening, the luxuriant charms of her favorite flowers, the regular but rapid movement of the perfect equipage, the pleasure of her little pet sister, and perhaps as much, or more than all, the being saved from the only circumstance that would take away from her enjoyment—a *tête-à-tête* with the Lover upon Trial.

"All's well that ends well;" and luckily they arrived at the Grange just a quarter of an hour before the time for the dinner-bell to sound. Mr. Mornington was persuaded, though not without some little difficulty—for where is the man, when anxious to please, who would not wish to make his toilet for dinner after a long drive and a heated manufactory on a hot day?—to give up all dressing at Highwood, and to content himself with the mere application of a little water to hands and face in Sir Williams' dressing-room; whilst Louisa and Lydia, who were used to arrange their dress far more quickly than do most pretty girls, were ready in the drawing-room before dinner was commenced, with changed but simple dresses, well-arranged hair, and looking as fresh and as smiling as heart could wish, and as if they had had a whole hour instead of one quarter for their preparations; whilst Mr. Mornington had the small comfort of observing that Lydia was bending over the china vase that held the beautiful datura blossoms, one of which she even broke with the tip of her delicate nose, as she inhaled its delicious perfume. Mr. Mornington almost wished he had been that datura blossom—poor man!

Now, Mornington himself did not look to advantage by any means. The day had been warm, and he felt hot; his cheeks had become even redder than usual, his hands decidedly more so; and gentlemen are not privileged, like ladies, to wear their gloves in-doors: he had on a peculiarly ugly neckcloth, which he had repented all the morning of having been so ill-judged as

to put on; but he had one in his mind's eye for dinner that he knew was becoming, and would certainly make up for his previous bad selection. But the time taken up by the honeysuckle-gathering, had precluded the possibility of this hoped-for change for the better; and, as he beheld himself reflected in a large mirror which he unfortunately passed as he conducted Lady Middlemore to the dining-room, he was painfully convinced that he had never looked worse—or, as he might have modified the phrase, so little well; whilst, to vex him still more by the contrast, Lydia, opposite to whom he sat at dinner, notwithstanding the heat of the day, fatigue, and hurried toilet, had never in his eyes looked so pretty, or had been so becomingly dressed; for she was in that most fascinating of female attires, clear white muslin.

Oh ye lovely ones! ye may look handsome, and beautiful, and elegant in dress of all hues—even in bright orange, that most hideous of colors—provided ye be really handsome, beautiful, or elegant; but if ye wish to be charming, fascinating, irresistible, engaging, and loveable, clothe yourselves in yards upon yards of transparent, snowy, fresh-looking muslin. Hard must be the heart, and unrefined the taste, that can resist the captivation of a pretty woman in white muslin!

So Lydia, in white muslin, with two or three sprigs of wild honeysuckle in her sash, sat exactly opposite Mr. Mornington; and although he feasted his eyes more amply than usual upon his charmer—and a charmer she most certainly was—yet, to confess the painful truth, he did not feast himself less in a more *material* way; for, in spite of the ices, and fruit, and cakes at the “Dolphin,” he really fed again at dinner voraciously. Slice after slice of the “perfect leg of mutton,” weighing seven pounds, roasted to a beautiful *brunette*, with its fine deep-red gravy, was speedily transferred to his rapidly-emptied plate; to say nothing of previous soup and fish, and delicate made-dishes, most, if not all, of which received a flattering welcome from the hungry lover, and all alike commented upon with repeated panegyrics, which greatly pleased Sir William, and equally disgusted his more fastidious daughter; for, in short, during the whole of the repast, scarcely any one subject was alluded to but that of food and feeding. Lydia was at all times a most moderate eater; and this day, having completely destroyed every inclination for dinner by the ice and fruit she had previously enjoyed, she scarcely tasted what she thought right, for form's sake, to take upon her plate, so that she had more than sufficient time to observe her admirer. Then there were his copious potations, consisting of many tumblers of strong and superior home-brewed ale—never refusing wine when it was brought to him; not to mention the

"very best cup that ever was made," and repeated glasses of superlative claret at desert; and all the while the poor man grew not "celestial," but terrestrial "rosy red." Louisa, in the mean time, was secretly watching her sister's countenance, so expressive of wonder and dismay, and much amused she was with her occupation. At all times, Lydia's varied expression was worth attending to.

"The man is a sort of boa-constrictor," thought Lydia, who almost expected to see him, before they left the dining-room, terminate this eating-bout by falling into the torpid and swollen state that creature experiences after having gorged itself—"at least a gormandizer, in the strictest sense of the word: an unpardonable failing, and a most unaccountable one for a professed lover. Surely," she continued to say to herself, "if I were in love, could not eat quite as much as usual. When the heart and mind are fully and deeply interested, one can hardly find time to attend to eating. Indeed, I always find my appetite leaves me altogether, if I feel anything at all acutely; and I suppose, when people *are* in love, they *do* feel acutely. Oh! I am quite right in what I thought from the first: he must have far more of matter than of mind in his composition, I am certain."

So reasoned with herself the fair Lydia; and certainly, it must be owned there are times when it is truly humiliating to poor human nature to have an appetite. But it is good to be humbled now and then, and that must be the consolation of those who feel hungry at undue times, and on inappropriate occasions, and are ashamed of it; but we do not believe that Mornington either felt humbled or ashamed of enjoying as he did an excellent family dinner. It was evident that the witnessing of his enjoyment pleased at least the head of the house.

The dining-room was due west; and the warmth of the evening rendering it very oppressive, Lady Middlemore, to the great joy of Lydia, made rather a hasty retreat, whilst Sir William, after their departure, observing that Mornington grew absent, and became rather indecorously inattentive to his host's eloquence, he for once—oh, wonderful!—waived his usual methodical half-hour's sitting in the lover's favor, and proposed joining the ladies, who were enjoying the soft evening air upon the velvet lawn, although the gloaming, as the Scotch prettily call twilight, was rapidly coming on; and Lydia never felt any change so grateful as of this quitting a hot dinner-room, redolent of meat and wine, for the perfumes of the garden; and a stuffing, dull, talking lover, for the warbling good-night of the sweet birds, as they made themselves ready for their nests.

Let not our readers be too hard upon my favorite Lydia, and consider her as over-refined or romantic. I cannot allow her to be so; but if she were, she has the excuse of not being yet twenty.

She was searching for a few of their early rosebuds, and had gathered two just bursting into loveliness, when she was joined by Mr. Mornington, which made her feel *rather* cross; and he did not appear to greater advantage than he had done at dinner, in the glow of the radiant crimson sky, which had been, as it were, left as a legacy to the earth by the recently-departed sun. Towards the east rose those vast masses of towering clouds, pile upon pile, looking like the snowy Alps tinted and gilt by the reflection of the glowing west.

There was a sort of exhilarating peace in the scene. Lydia thought of that exquisite stanza from the "Castle of Indolence," and her lips almost began to murmur—

‘I care not, fortune, what you me deny,’

when she remembered who was by her side, and she checked herself. Mornington asked for one of the roses Lydia held in her hand, which was immediately presented, whilst she said, in her pretty manner—

“A simple rose is a poor return for the splendid flowers you sent my sister and me this morning.”

“This is far more lovely, and more valuable too, in my eyes,” said Mornington, with a very tolerable air of gallantry, raising it—not to his lips, but—to his nose.

Lydia felt rather inclined to smile, but resisted the temptation.

“I shall,” he continued, still snuffing up the perfume of the rose, whilst bruising its delicate petals by the repeated action—“I shall be too happy to supply you with as many flowers as you may like to have; they cannot be better employed than in your service, and I am afraid they are quite thrown away upon me—except—when——.” He paused, looked at his rose, and was silent. He meant a great deal, but felt he could not express himself to his somewhat alarmed charmer as he desired, particularly as, from sniffing them up, two or three of their delicate leaves fell to the ground. So, after a minute or two of pause, he continued:

“Generally speaking, I never think about flowers. I had rather go into my stables and look at my horses than visit all the conservatories in England. Nay, I would rather walk into the fields and admire my cattle, which, by-the way, I want to show Sir William, as I am assured by judges they are of the first

breed the county can boast. You would hardly believe, were I to tell you, the sum I was lately offered, and which I refused, for a black bull, that——”

“What clouds!” said Lydia, interrupting his panegyric by her exclamation, as she suddenly turned fairly round to gaze upon the magnificent pile, whose splendor might have attracted an eye even less alive to the sublime and beautiful than that of Lydia. Then recollecting herself, she said gently——

“I sincerely beg your pardon for interrupting you, but those clouds——” and she paused to admire them.

“Do not be afraid,” said Mornington, soothingly. “I do not think we shall have any thunder to-night, although it is so sultry.”

“Oh!” said Lydia, smiling, “I was not thinking of thunder, nor of fear either: I am not at all afraid of a storm; but I was quite struck and dazzled by the grandeur and color of the sky. It is odd enough, too, that this very day Mrs. Lennard was showing me a very beautiful work which she had just bought, upon astronomical and meteorological subjects chiefly, with colored illustrations; and one of those happened to be clouds just in the style of this magnificent mass, the technical term for which, I found, was ‘cumulus;’ and certainly it said there, that their appearance in the evening frequently portended lightning. But I was so glad to find the names of the different kinds of clouds; so I begged Mrs. Lennard to write them down for me, for I fear I have but a bad memory; but I perfectly recollect that these we are gazing upon are called cumulus.”

“Cumulus,” repeated Mornington, gently, to himself. He was rummaging for his lost Latin in the chamber of his brain; groping about in that disorderly sort of lumber-room, where many of our confused and scattered recollections seemed to be heaped up, and from whence we too often vainly seek to extricate the little bit of knowledge wanted at the moment; but, alas! the want of order, memory, and habit of searching that apartment, often all combine to prevent our successful search. So “cumulus” remained only guessed at, although he did think of the English word “accumulate;” and he flattered himself that was something like extrication from the learned labyrinth—for, as all is by comparison, it was learned to him—into which his fair mistress had beguiled him. The quick-sighted Lydia saw at once all his little perplexities; she could not help comparing him with the well-informed Mrs. Lennard, and thought what a useful present she might make him, if she dared to give him what she had lately bought to help her out of her difficulties—her own Latin dictionary—instead of her rose.

"I have never," resumed Lydia, "been so fortunate as to travel abroad; but when I behold those towering masses of mountainous clouds, I always think they must resemble the Alps. Did you ever see anything so grand? It makes one long to be amongst them."

"I had much rather be where I am, on *terra firma*," said Mornington; "but since you have made the remark, they *are* very striking in their appearance, and certainly very like the Alps." Lydia thought of Polonius acquiescing in Hamlet's remark. "But I never thought of taking notice of clouds before, except when anxious about the weather."

"Neither clouds nor flowers!" thought Lydia; no taste, I imagine, but for good eating and drinking, fine horses, cattle, and such things.

"I wonder," she continued aloud, "that you never have observed what to me enhances the beauty of every scene in nature. From a very child, I always felt the greatest admiration for fine skies. Often and often have I sat watching such clouds as these, until I have fancied I saw all sorts of wonderful things amongst them—castles and their battlements, giants and demigods, battle-steeds and war-chariots, and a thousand other glorious objects, until all at last vanished away, and I was left again to the sober realities of life."

"I have done the same sort of thing," replied Mornington, after dinner in the winter, when sitting opposite the fire half asleep: I have often seen a hot coal looking like a horse or a dog—or perhaps a man's head; but it always worried me; so I used to take the poker, stir up a famous blaze, and there was an end of my visions."

Lydia was almost at a stand-still. What could she say? This fire simile threw cold water—though that sounds rather Irish—on all her attempts at eliciting anything like fancy or imagination from her admirer. However, she made one more effort and said—

"Ah! there is something sombre and lurid about a fire of that description, which might give rise to unpleasant imaginations. Now, if one had been reading 'Paradise Lost,' or 'Dante's Inferno,' one might in fancy behold the place to which the fallen angels were banished, or that circle where Dante's heretics were punished; or imagine the sublime horrors of a volcano, or a hundred other painful subjects: but a sky like that! so glorious, yet so soothing at the same time! Oh! I could look at it for ever without being weary."

Mr. Mornington was rather bewildered. "Paradise Lost" he knew was written by Milton, and he had read parts of it many

years ago, and had, as a boy, been made to learn that fine, but unfortunately too often quoted and thus hacknied passage, beginning,

“These are thy glorious works!”

of which he just remembered a line here and there. But as for the “Inferno,” he knew no more about it than would a new-born child, excepting that he was aware Dante was an Italian poet. He had never even seen a translation; and so what the circles might mean to which Lydia alluded he could not even guess. It was worse than “cumulus;” but he was forced to “burst in ignorance,” or betray it; and he rather preferred the former distress. However, he said, after a moment’s pause—

“The lower part of the sky to-night is shaded off beautifully.” Lydia had some hopes of him. “Shaded off exactly like that pretty-rose colored ribbon you had in your straw-bonnet this morning.”

There was a simile! He probably was not aware that a simile should rise above the subject, not fall below it.

Lydia, now by an easy manœuvre, contrived to join the rest of the party; and after loitering with them a few minutes, glided by degrees gently away, and took a solitary path, which led into the walk that skirted their grounds, and towards the favorite water-mill.

“How delightful to be alone sometimes!” thought Lydia, as she sauntered along, still occasionally turning her eyes towards the splendid sky that had not extorted any genuine admiration from Mornington. “Far more pleasant even to be always alone than constantly with those who are not congenial to us. It must be hard, though I have never yet experienced it, to be obliged to be parted from those whom we love, and whose society is everything to us; but far worse to pass our life with persons, intercourse with whom would be a perpetual grievance. May that never be my lot!—to spend the hours and the days with one with whom we have scarcely a feeling in common; whose every taste and opinion is completely the reverse of our own; whose manner, address, even the very tone of voice, seem to grate upon our every feeling: and all this, perhaps, from the being whom we are not only compelled to live with, but ought to love. Ought to love! There cannot be a more painful thought than that there is some one person whom it is a *duty* to love, and whom we cannot love; to have to call to mind his good qualities—for, unluckily, good qualities alone do not *always* engage the affections as they ought to do—and then to say to ourselves reproachfully, Why do I feel no real affection for that person? why does

such a failing, such a weakness, such a habit, impress my mind so disagreeably? why is it always starting up before me, and as invariably striking me as just the most odious, anti-loveable failing, weakness, or habit, in the whole catalogue of faults? And then, again, to go on struggling with ourselves, and with what others might call an undue repugnance to the being in question—the being we *ought* to love! and yet all in vain: and that sort of struggle, and reproach, and inability to love, always continuing—a whole life! Oh! it would be intolerable; and with a husband! No; far better live and die that despised personage, an old maid!”

Lydia, however, dared not converse long with her thoughts in this way; for she knew her father would not be pleased were she to absent herself for any time from their small party, whilst the Lover upon Trial made one of it; so, after another ardent gaze at the fast-fading splendor of the evening sky, and a glance at the few diamond drops that were already beginning to glisten in the firmament, finding the lawn forsaken, she returned to the drawing-room and to her unsentimental lover. He was apparently talking very contentedly to Sir William about the fine breed of cattle on which he had vainly held forth to Lydia, to which account her father evidently attended with interest, as he promised to walk over to Highwood on the following morning, expressly to look at them.

The conversation was then led by Lady Middlemore to the subject of the small remaining breed of wild cattle that still exists in the parks of a very limited number of the English nobility, chiefly towards the north of England, of which so spirited an account is given in one of Mr. Howitt's works. This came more within the sphere of Mornington's imaginative capabilities than Milton's pandemonium or the circles of Dante's "Inferno." The book was one which formed a part of Lydia's own collection, and she very graciously and sweetly offered to lend it to him—an offer most gratefully accepted, and which extorted from Sir William on approving smile.

Lady Middlemore continued talking so pleasantly that Mr. Mornington really liked to listen. She was an agreeable person, although in that way, as in many others, the very antipodes of her "lengthy" husband—for we must be permitted to borrow the transatlantic epithet. What she had to say was quietly, simply, and clearly expressed; for she had naturally a great flow of language, which, however, had never yet induced her to enlarge unnecessarily upon any topic she might be tempted to handle. Her conversation resembled a spirited sketch, very often of little more than a few lines here and there, but which were

marked and defined enough to give a complete idea of her subject, leaving much to be filled up by the imagination of her listeners, when they had any, and yet did not draw upon them to elicit fresh ideas if they had none to give in return. Sir William at times talked well, and there was always a certain degree of matter in his discourse; but it was generally, at least when he wished to impress or to shine, like a very fine pen-and-ink drawing, in which every little stroke is so carefully attended to, that the whole becomes too much picked out and touched up to be pleasing, and has a sort of flat uniformity about it that wearies, although there is a good deal to praise in it.

After all, where is the standard by which agreeableness is to be measured? Like most other things, the standard cannot be a settled one, for almost everybody has his own peculiar opinions and ideas on the subject. To some, the retailer of anecdotes, witticisms, and *bon mots*, is the perfection of agreeableness; to others, on the contrary, such a person becomes wearisome to satiety after a couple of interviews. Then there is the universal talker—one who can say a little upon every topic, and not much upon any one—a sort of person of whom it is remarked, “He has a good deal to say for himself:” a species of conversation that takes with the multitude. Again, there is the acute reasoner—the conclusive, or perhaps the plausible arguer, who is never so happy as when plunging into the depths of metaphysics, and endeavoring to elucidate difficulties. Again, there are those two delight to examine, to sound, and to discuss the different passions and feelings of the human character, with its inconsistencies and varieties, vainly endeavoring to reconcile the contradictions, or to account for them. Each of these will, by various listeners with different tastes, be deemed the most agreeable of mortals. Happy variety of opinion! What would become of a multitude of the now-considered pleasant *conversationists*, if there were only one standard for mental agreeableness, as there is but one for bodily height? All this was passing in Lydia’s lively imagination, when her mother’s pleasant discourse was interrupted by the little bustle caused by the bringing in of tea; but she also settled that poor Mr. Mornington could never be placed even at the very foot of the catalogue of agreeable people.

That gentleman took his leave rather early. Whether he fancied that the one he most wished to please appeared rather *ennuyée*, or whether he thought that, as he had been in their company since two o’clock in the afternoon, it was better for him to take himself away, we will not pretend to decide; but go he did, sooner than Lydia had allowed herself to anticipate. It is an awful thing generally speaking, to be the last, and, still

more, the only departing one of a party; for there is almost invariably an intimate and universal impulse to discuss the merits or demerits of the absentee; and whether the former or the latter are most usually animadverted upon, I will leave the candid reader to settle.

Yes, poor departed one! I pity you sincerely; for you are generally more thoroughly, and also more severely, taken to pieces than if you had really departed this life for ever and aye! For when once a person is dead—dead and buried—his friends and acquaintances are commonly far more tender of his faults than they were whilst he was living, and often bring forward many good qualities which they had never prized whilst he was amongst them. But the temporarily departed—he has usually no grace shown *him*: he is keenly and closely dissected, and often in the dissection faults are thought to be discovered which actually do not exist in his character. His looks, his movements, his intonation of voice, all very frequently give rise to remarks upon supposed motives and feelings of which the unconscious departed was in fact perfectly innocent. The victim who thus last leaves a social party, and his character at their mercy, may be pretty certain that it will more or less suffer by this generally ample discussion of it; and it will not be put together again satisfactorily, or left as it really is. Perhaps this might be one of the reasons that, alas! induced an ancient and distinguished Christian to declare, that he had never been in any society from which he had not come away the worse; for there is nothing so common as gossip and scandal, and nothing more infectious than both.

However, the Middlemore family was anything but an ill-natured one, and the mistress of it ever discouraged such proceedings, although it must be owned she had a little difficulty in preventing the lively Lydia from being rather unduly free in her remarks upon people in general. Mr. Mornington was half-way on his road home, and as yet not an observation had been made about him; for it was rather slippery ground to tread upon, and no one perhaps was altogether inclined to venture on it. Louisa was working industriously, and Lady Middlemore was at her writing-table, finishing a letter to one of her absent sons. Sir William had a review in his hand, and his own exclusive little table and candle close by him; but he held his book carelessly, and his eyes were not even upon it. He was looking, though unobserved by her, at Lydia, whose slight and pretty figure was stretched listlessly and gracefully in a comfortable arm-chair, her hands clasped and resting upon her lap, and she was to all appearance lost in thought.

"A sovereign for your thoughts, Lydia!" said Sir William, more playfully than was his wont; for he had a great notion of keeping up his dignity, even with his children. Come, tell me what they were turned upon—or rather on whom, perhaps I should say."

"No one in particular, dear father; people in general just then. I had been thinking how amusing it would be—the idea came into my head while you were all talking to Mr. Mornington—if one could make a comparative chart of different people's minds, in the style of the one in the school-room, where all the chief rivers and mountains in the world are drawn so as to show their different proportions from the almost endless Mississippi and the towering Himalay range, down to our poor little Thames and Snowdon; it would be so entertaining, if it were possible, to take an exact measurement of the various degrees of human intellect, and compare them one with another; for I am sure we should find as wonderful a disproportion amongst them as we find amongst the mountains and rivers of our world."

"Matter and mind, Lydia," commenced Sir William, with that leisurely tone and manner that invariably foreboded one of his long harangues of picked words and hesitation—"Matter and mind, my dear, are, you know, very different sorts of things, and do not admit of being reasoned upon in the same way. One can be treated with mathematical precision—I should rather say certainty—and can be fairly, clearly, satisfactorily determined; or, rather, many of the greatest difficulties respecting matter may be—indeed are—perfectly tested—I should say, proved. But mind, Lydia—mind—that ethereal—what shall I term it?—essence, spirit, perhaps—which, though neither tangible nor visible, we nevertheless know—we feel exists; exists, too, in many to a degree of power—perhaps I should say of force and perfection—that appears in a chosen few, almost superhuman; how could it be possible justly, accurately, to calculate upon the exact quantity—or rather I should say, quality—of each individual mind, even as regards itself? Much more impossible would it be to measure its strength, its power, its capacity, its lucidity: rather, in one word, its extent, relatively to that of another."

Here Sir William paused, and refreshed himself, as usual, with a pinch of snuff.

All that he had been saying passed rapidly through Lydia's quick apprehension some time before her father arrived at the end of his speech. Mr. G., the experienced short-hand writer once said, "that with regard to every speaker whom he had ever heard, he could almost always, by long experience in his art,

guess the form of the latter part of the sentence by that of the beginning; but that the conclusion of every one of Coleridge's sentences was a surprise to him: he was obliged to listen to the last word."

Our readers will feel that Sir William Middlemore was the very reverse of Coleridge, and Lydia had already had sufficient experience with her tedious father to guess, as Mr. G. did with the generality, the endings of *his* beginnings, and besides, that she could have expressed all he said herself in fewer words and in a clearer manner; but she never allowed the smallest impatience to manifest itself, nor did she ever venture to assist him, when he was selecting his words, with the more appropriate ones that were hovering about her own red lips. No; Lydia felt respect for her father. She even respected his weaknesses, and Sir William, like a stammerer, could not endure to be helped. Moreover, as it was evident she was now expected to answer, she said, "I know, papa, it would, as you say, be quite impossible to make a thoroughly correct comparison and estimate of different people's minds: but still I think the subject might be discussed very entertainingly by a superior and discerning person, accustomed to weigh accurately the talents of others; and I do think one might attempt such a thing for one's own amusement, and make a sort of chart of them. Now Mr. Seton should be at once the Peak of Teneriffe, and Mr. Mornington," she added, with a half-saucy smile, "the Peak of Derbyshire; but, after all, the latter is rather too complimentary a similitude, for I do really think he is as flat as Salisbury Plain, and without any Stonehenge to make him interesting." At this absurd similitude, Louisa—the sober, the good-natured, and the discreet—could not resist laughing outright.

"Lydia! Lydia!" said Sir William, sternly shaking his head, "I wish you would cure yourself of your satirical propensities."

"Dear father! satirical! That is a very hard word. Now, do you know," and she drew near, and looked coaxingly up in his face, "if we were to begin to measure words fairly, as we have been wishing to do minds, I think you would allow the word *satirical* is rather too severe an adjective for my little, harmless love of quizzing." Then turning to a book-case, she took down Johnson's Dictionary.

"'Satirical—censorious, severe in language.' Now, dear papa, you will not call your poor Lydia 'censorious,' surely?"

"Why, perhaps not altogether," said the father, unable to resist her endearing manner; and drawing her light figure near him, he made her seat herself on his knee, whilst he thought of the old-fashioned but elegant lines—

'If to her share some human errors fall,
Look in her face and you'll forget them all.'

But he was too wise to utter them, so he went on with his lecture, but in a mild tone :

"Perhaps not altogether ; but still sometimes 'severe in language.' What do you say, my dear?"

"My dear," by itself—"my dear"—of course always means "my wife." It is the usual expression for middle-aged conjugal endearment. Strange, too, that the precious little possessive pronoun should actually lessen the affectionate force of the epithet, instead of increasing it, but so it is. "Dear" by itself sounds so much more affectionate—so young—so loving—so coaxing ! but a stiff "my dear" sounds more like a respectable sort of remonstrance than a tender address.

"My dear," however, answered very decidedly—"Lydia knows my opinion upon that subject too well to make it necessary for me to say that it quite coincides with your own."

Sir William was always secretly gratified, not to say proud, whenever his wife happened to agree with him. We say "happened," because it did not occur quite so often as he could wish ; and it was strange, perhaps, but true, that although he did pique himself upon his own mental powers, he never felt perfectly satisfied that they had exercised themselves justly when Lady Middlemore took a different view of a case. Lydia's beaming eye, however, became suddenly overcast. She looked imploringly at Louisa ; but that loving sister was too conscientious and too true to take even her darling's part when she could not do so with sincerity ; and though from beneath her eyelids she saw Lydia's glance, she worked on and did not return it.

"Well," said Lydia, half gravely, half playfully, "I really think if we are never to make a remark upon our fellow-mortals, we had better shut ourselves up in a cloister at once, and thus avoid all society and temptation to observe ; for to me I confess there is nothing so entertaining as looking into people's characters."

"Except laughing at them afterwards," said her mother, whose pen went on as rapidly as if she neither heard nor spoke.

"There is no enjoyment of any sort, or scarcely any," said the rather pertinacious Lydia, "without sharing it with or communicating it to others ; and besides, dear mother, we cannot be blind or deaf to all that is going on around us, or see follies and faults without noticing them, and, if we do notice, without speaking of them—at least to those to whom we are accustomed to tell our every thought."

"Dearest Lydia" said her mother, putting down her pen for

the moment, "if you only confided your observations to your own immediate family circle—although, even then, dwelling upon and discussing the bad instead of the good, perpetually, would be an uncharitable habit, yet it would certainly be less mischievous."

"Mischievous! Oh, mother!"

"I know," returned her mother, "that is the last thing you, Lydia, would like to be; but believe me, your extreme vivacity leads you on too quickly, before you are aware of what you are about; and I have frequently heard you, in consequence, talk to strangers of other individuals in a manner which I think very objectionable."

"Say no more, dearest mother," said Lydia, rising quickly, and throwing her arms round Lady Middlemore's neck. "Yes, yes; I know I am only too full of faults, and the one mentioned is amongst them."

Oh! the graciousness and gracefulness of such a frank confession—and as rare as it is attractive! Lydia was not unfrequently in fault, notwithstanding very many sterling qualities; for, as her mother said, she was often run away with by the enthusiasm and quickness of her feelings; but she was one who, when really convinced that she was wrong, never hesitated to own her error, and that in the frankest and most uncompromising manner: it was one of her most endearing qualities.

The mother fondly passed her hand over the glossy head of her darling, and Sir William stretched out one of his to her.

"But, mamma," continued Lydia, quickly getting the better of her momentary sadness, "you must let me talk at home just as I feel and think, and I will promise to pick out all the good I can find in everybody," she added, laughing. "Nay, dear papa! do not shake your head—I really mean to try to correct my fault; but if I were to screw up quite tight at home, and abroad too, it would choke me."

"I have somewhere read," began Sir William, pompously, "although I cannot now recall where—what was the work, or who was the author——" He paused, twisted his cameo ring, rubbed his forehead; but it would not do. "Well, I cannot recollect—but I remember the drift of the passage, and that was, that it shows more quickness of intellect—rather, I should say, more decided discrimination—in a mind, to be able to detect the good that is in a character sooner than the bad: and that you may easily understand, inasmuch as faults and foibles, being the cause of very disagreeable results, are, if I may so say, most evident—striking, rather—or, as the French say, and the saying is expressive—'*cela saute aux yeux*.'—Sir William prided himself both upon his knowledge and pronounciation of the French

language—"whereas," he continued, "the more solid good in characters often lies dormant, or at least undetected. It is so with the sunken vein of gold or silver that runs through a mine of otherwise unsightly, at least unattractive metal, and which would only be distinguished—rather brought to light—by an experienced miner.

It is a fortunate thing that all qualities of body and mind are not invariably inherited, especially as, when they are, they are not unfrequently aggravated. Perhaps Lady Middlemore thought thus, as she could hardly help comparing the prosiness of her good husband and the brilliant rapidity of her fair daughter. In this slow school, however, both wife and daughters had learned patience; for not one of them even for a moment thought of attempting to interrupt, either by word, look, or gesture, the very slowly-trickling stream of what Sir William flattered himself was eloquence.

"Well, dear father," said Lydia, soothingly, "I will try and form my capability of discerning the good, and will begin with Mr. Mornington. I am sure he is very good-natured and obliging; how kind he always is to our sometimes troublesome darling, Fanny!"

Here the sober Louisa looked from her work to her mother, and smiled. Lydia observed it.

"Now, Louisa, what does that wicked smile mean?—for wicked it was, I am certain. See, papa, what fine encouragement I get from the rational Louisa!"

"Since you have observed my looks, Lydia, I own that I smiled because I happened to mention to mamma that I heard Mr. Mornington say Fanny was as like you as any child could be to a grown-up sister, and therefore I set down the good-natured attention he pays her to that account."

"And so deprive the poor man of the little merit I attributed to him. For all that, I am disposed to believe that Mr. Mornington *is* good-natured, and good-tempered too;" but as Sir William here touched his repeater, which sounded a quarter to eleven, they all arose, took their candles, and retired for the night.

A day now seldom passed that the Middlemores did not see Mr. Mornington in the course of it. Poor man! he was very thoroughly in love; and we must do him the justice to say, that his preference for Lydia proved he had greater refinement of taste than most persons would have given him credit for; for Lydia, in point of actual beauty, was certainly not to be com-

pared with Louisa; and it might naturally have been expected that Mornington would have been the sort of person to have been more struck with the elder sister, who, *au premier abord*, was almost invariably allowed to be far the handsomer; but there is no arguing upon what people are likely to feel or not to feel; yet it certainly was to the surprise of all, especially Lady Middlemore, that the matter-of-fact individual in question should be so deeply smitten with the less regularly beautiful Lydia than with the black-eyed, brilliantly-colored Louisa. Mornington, however, had at once been attracted by that very symmetrical, graceful figure; her delicate but not perfect features, her light-blue eyes, made expressive by uncommonly large and black pupils, which some of the wise ones of the present day tell us always denote great imaginative powers and which eyes glanced about in their brightness, revealing her varying and quickly-excited thoughts and feelings through the showers of sunny ringlets that fell about her face in rich profusion. Her height Mornington thought perfect, though, for a woman, it bore no sort of proportion with his own, which was some inches beyond that which falls to the lot of those who are considered tall men—although it would not have warranted him with actual truth to quote that pretty line from one of Shakspeare's lovers, who, when questioned as to his mistress's height, answers—

‘Just as high as my heart.’

Then there was something so feminine, so lady-like, about her hand—her long fingers—the pretty little rings that she wore upon them shone and dazzled his eyes so pleasantly when she moved her hands about in all her lively actions—those hands were so white, and the nicely-turned wrist, so delicately veined! In short, she was, in poor Mornington's large round eyes, so charming, so graceful, and so peculiarly attractive, that he looked upon her as sort of phoenix, from whose ashes—but forbid it, Love, that she should ever turn to such whilst he lived!—he never could expect another to rise. Lydia was a sort of girl to bewitch, and Mornington was bewitched. He had been able to discover that she had also charms of mind; that, for one so young, she appeared to know much, and ardently desired to know a great deal more; and that, although intellectual pursuits were what she deeply valued and sought after, her love for them really proceeded from a desire for information—the delight she experienced in feeling her mind expanding; and that there was no love of show, no self-conceit about her. Even if made aware that her mind was naturally of no common order, and that, like the flow-

er which always turns towards the sun, it invariably inclined towards those whose intellectual powers would warm and invigorate her own, still she felt how much was wanting in herself, in various ways; and the only unpleasant result of her intellectual tastes was the *ennui* occasioned by common-place conversation, and by intercourse with insipid people.

Poor Mornington! he soon saw and doted upon all this, for he had more observation than he was generally given credit for—had an affectionate heart and no inconsiderable share of natural understanding; but his education had not been otherwise attended to than by sending him to a public school, from whence he was taken too soon, after being considerably idle there, and he had terribly neglected all he should have done for himself afterwards; for if people will not help themselves, no good can come of any sort of education. Heir to a large fortune, his father, a man of second-rate abilities, had fancied that a very small share of *learning* would be quite sufficient for one who would be so well off in the world; and so that son had himself continued to think for a long time. But now, since his acquaintance with Lydia, he began to feel and deeply lament how deficient he was in much, and indeed in almost all, that a gentleman is expected to know. He soon discovered that Lydia had, from her childhood, lived and breathed in what might be called an intellectual atmosphere; for, with all his prosiness, Sir Willam Middlemore was a thoroughly well-informed man and a peculiarly excellent classical scholar; whilst his wife's natural powers of mind, though they had been less cultivated than his own, were far beyond them in extent and originality. Besides, there had always been much reading, and much conversation upon what was read in the family. So Mornington's eyes were all at once most painfully opened to his own deficiencies, and sadly did he lament them. However, he was too much in love to give up all hope upon this rather despairing subject, which, it must be owned, is almost such when a man of nearly thirty feels he has everything to begin again, as it were, to be respectably informed upon points of which he now knew little, if he had ever known anything. But as "faint heart never won fair lady," and as to win Lydia was now the poor man's greatest ambition, he resolved to do what was possible to be done in so bad a case; so he set about putting what was called the library at Highwood in order, for the bookcases were very handsome ones, and capable of holding a vast quantity of those, to some people, precious things called books, which to others are only so much loose lumber, and until lately they had been the latter to Mornington. But now it was a very different thing: his own stock was very small, and looked most forlorn when he had

arranged it on two or three solitary shelves. But as money was no object to him, and as books he was determined to have, he wrote at once to one of the first London booksellers to send him down an excellent collection of books, sufficient to fit up, as he termed it, "*a small gentleman's library*." Luckily for him the bookseller in question was not perhaps likely to see the somewhat colossal-looking personage who had given him so vague an order, clothed in such incorrect phraseology, as he certainly would have been tempted to smile had ocular demonstration been afforded him of the particularly unfortunate manner in which his new customer had placed his adjective.

It seems Mr. Mornington left the selection entirely to Mr. M——'s taste, only begging him to send "a few of the classics!" Alas, poor man!

Certainly when they all did arrive, his valet, who had now lived with him many years—for a better or more easy master could rarely be found—was a good deal astonished at the appearance of so many boxes of new books, sent to one whom he had hardly ever beheld with one in his hand, save the novel of the day, or of late a few upon agriculture and trees. But there they were, in the neatest, some of them in the richest bindings; and in the first page of every one the family crest, with "Charles Francis Mornington" at full length beneath it.

In a very short time, so impatient was the lover, they were unpacked; steps and ladders were quickly brought, and by sunset the library was perfectly filled and properly arranged. But, alas! all looked so betrayingly new, it was easy to see at a glance that none of the works had ever been studied, except those very few which had been Mornington's when a youth, at the time when a certain degree of study was forced upon him, and into him; and that small collection had been so ill used and so thrown about, that now he was obliged to put them quite out of sight, so painfully did their outward garb contrast with the fresh and elegant bindings of the new-comers.

Mornington decided upon making this library his habitual morning room: it would look well; and it had two most comfortable arm-chairs, with a handsome and commodious table in the centre; so, the very morning after this new arrangement, as soon as breakfast was over, he took down a beautiful-looking Virgil, placed it in a most convenient reading-desk, took especial care to have a capital dictionary by his side, and then began to read—or rather, we should say, attempted to read—but alas! it was a most difficult, an almost hopeless business. Here and there he made out a line or two; but, take it all in all, he might nearly as well have tried to puzzle out the Esquimaux language, or any

other barbarous or civilized one that he had never before beheld, as attempt to understand Virgil. He put it away, took down a Livy; it was all the same. In despair he fetched one of the volumes he had been forced to read in early youth. He hoped that the sight of lines he had formerly been compelled so often and so painfully to dwell upon would bring back some of the very little knowledge of them he had once possessed, but it would not do. He found to his sorrow that he had forgotten all he once knew of "the classics;" and, but that they looked to advantage on his shelves, he might quite as well have omitted that part of his order to Mr. M——. Still he resolved to try and recover all he once knew. What that *all* consisted of we will not pretend to ascertain; and he made a determination to read Latin for an hour every morning after breakfast, unless anything very particular occurred to prevent him, intending by degrees to lengthen his studies. He then wandered along the shelves of his bookcase, reading over their titles on their fresh-looking backs, until his eye rested on a geological work, by one of the most learned men of the day, and he eagerly took it down, because he had recently heard Lydia say that Mrs. Lennard was reading it, and had shown her some very interesting passages in it, which she was equal to understand, but that the work was a deep one, too deep for women in general. "Too deep also for men in general," thought poor Charles Francis Mornington, as his eye rested in despair on a multitude of very hard words, of which he did not even know the meanings, nor could he guess them—they were worse than "cumulus;" and he had no clue to guide him through the perplexing labyrinth. "Oh!" thought he, "that I were a good classical scholar! then I should be acquainted with the original words from which many of these crabbed ones are derived, and then"—then he thought how well he might have talked to and amused Lydia. How willingly would she have then listened to him, with that pleased but earnest gaze which ever marked her expressive countenance, when conversation that interested her was going on!—an expression so charming that it might almost turn the attention of the most eloquent speaker from his interesting subject to her more interesting self. He sighed sadly, and put away the book; and, feeling his head confused, and his heart—the best part of the poor man—much inclined to ache also, he went into his grounds to refresh himself with the sight of a new and thriving plantation, and to forget, for the time being, his great regret at finding out, too late, that he was almost, if not altogether, an ignoramus.

He however derived one great comfort from his new mine of intellectual wealth. Lydia should have the entire command of

the Library: she might borrow any works she fancied, and, what was more, keep them as long as she liked. Sir William's library was a choice but small one, and Mr. Mornington had already discovered that, in their part of the world, there was difficulty in getting as many books to read as the inhabitants of the Grange desired. So he glanced at the sum total of his very large bill from his bookseller, and did not for a moment regret its magnitude. He felt so discouraged, the whole of the day after his vain attempt to brush up his Latin, that he could not even bring himself to visit his lady-love, and almost wished in his heart she was not as superior in mind to most girls of her own age as she was in attraction of person. A little less clever, and she would still have been quite well-enough informed for him. And yet it sat so well upon her! and she was so pleasant, so natural, and so gay!

However, he could not go on long without beholding her, and the next time he did visit the Grange, Sir William and lady Middlemore were out: still, the footman, who, I must presume, was in some degree aware of what was going on, of his own accord said, the young ladies were at home, and showed him into the drawing-room; but as no one was there, and as the windows were open to the lawn, he sauntered out, and soon found himself wandering by another open window into what was called the school-room, where he found Lydia at her drawing-table, whilst Louisa was reading to her aloud. The two younger girls were occupied in their gardens. Lydia, much interested with the book, was provoked at this intrusion, and, after a tolerably gracious "good morning," busily went on drawing, leaving Louisa to talk to the intruder. At last Mr. Mornington ventured to approach "*la belle sauvage*," and stood at the back of her chair, admiring the hand that held the camel's-hair pencil.

"Oh! how like!" he continued; "the water-mill itself, and its surrounding trees exactly!—just as it is seen from my side of the stream! But, indeed, your copy is better than the original, whoever did it," as he continued looking at her touches here and there—"more masterly—better colored—and——"

But here his attention was attracted by a gentle shaking of the delicate figure of his beloved, which she vainly strove to repress; and, feeling sure it must be perceived, she gave way to a merry peal at once, and said—

"The drawing I have been touching up is my sister Flora's copy: the original, of which you think less well, is mine, taken on the spot;" and then she again relapsed into her gleesome laugh, which was really so becoming, and seemed so irresistible, that the somewhat disconcerted lover hardly knew whether he

should laugh with her or lament with himself. He was caught in an awkward net of his own making, and it was rather difficult to know how he should get out of it; for the truth was, that, although he was no great judge of drawing, it must have been plain, even to a still less practised eye than his own, that the original picture was an excellent one, and Flora's only a very respectable copy. But, in his earnest desire to make himself agreeable, he paid her a compliment at the expense of truth, thinking that the drawing she was then engaged with must be her own. And now, how could he persuade her to believe that he *had* flattered her at the expense of truth? However, he clearly pursued the best method, this time. It was that of sincerity.

"You will not believe me, I fear, and indeed I cannot wonder if you do not," he said, dismally enough; "but I give you my word that what I say now is the fact—that it did appear to me that the drawing I thought you were copying was the better; but I was foolish enough to fancy you could be, like most young ladies, pleased with an undeserved compliment; and yet I certainly ought to have known by this time how unlike you are to the generality of young ladies."

"Am I to take that for truth, and if the truth, am I to regard it as a flattering one, the being altogether so unlike most young ladies?" said Lydia, with an arch and somewhat malicious little glance, as much as to say she thought she should perplex him. "Both," said Mornington, decidedly—"it is the very truth, and yet I mean it to be an agreeable one, because there are so many things about many girls I do not admire at all; they have often such foolish ways, and such affected manners, that it is very rare, and also very charming, to see one"—he corrected himself, while even Louisa could not resist a smile—"two young ladies, so superior in every way as I have found the Misses Middlemore to be."

"Well," said Lydia with one of her sweet smiles, and good-humoredly giving him her hand, for she was really pleased with his frankness and pitied his uncomfortable feelings, "after all, you see how true is the old addage, that 'Honesty is the best policy.'" Mornington was sufficiently comforted to be about to raise the little hand to his lips, but she colored slightly, and hastily withdrew it.

"Yes, certainly," he replied, secretly disappointed at the failure of this attempt; "but I do hope, with all my faults and failings—and of late I have been more alive to them than I used to be—that in honest sincerity I am usually not wanting. I despise falsehood from my heart, and am truly vexed at having committed myself as I have just done."

"Oh!" said Lydia, kindly, whilst she resolved never to offer him her hand again, "we all do foolish things sometimes; but, now that you know we love truth as well as you say you do"—and here there was something of a little, half-wicked, half-doubting smile—"I am sure you will not flatter either of us again."

"Never! but then you must promise me that, if I say what you with undue humility do not choose to fancy you deserve, you will still believe that I really mean what I say: will you?"

"I will try," said Lydia, with some emphasis. "And I shall always believe you henceforth," said the ever-consoling and encouraging Louisa, who was convinced that all he was now saying was sincere.

"I thank you much for that, Miss Middlemore," said the poor man; "and now," he continued, turning to Lydia, "if you would kindly wish to reconcile me with myself, give me that drawing, though I shall never look at it without thinking of my folly." He did not dare to say, "of you."

"Oh! with pleasure. if you care to have it: be so kind as just to look about in that recess," pointing to the farthest part of the room, "for a sheet of paper, and I will roll it up in it."

He went accordingly, as directed, and whilst looking about for it, for he did not discover it, at first, amidst a heap of music, a slight bustle was heard in the passage, the door opened, and in burst a slender, handsome-looking youth, who, rushing up to Louisa, gave her a hearty embrace, saying—"My dear Lou, how glad I am to see you!—how well you look!—as handsome as ever:" then turning towards Lydia, but in a more subdued style: "My dearest Lydia!" he took her hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Why, Fred," said Louisa, "where do you come from? We thought you were in the Mediterranean."

"And so I have been. Such a cruise! Landing every now and then, to catch a glimpse of earthly paradises. Oh, Lydia! how often I did wish for you! how you would have enjoyed such scenes! Naples, too!—oh! quite heavenly. But we were ordered home; and I am on my way to mine; so I thought I would take you all *en route*."

"*En route*, indeed, and quite in the way!" said Lydia, laughing. "Why, your notions of English geography are not too correct, or else you choose to alter it to please yourself;" and then taking up a pencil that lay upon her drawing-table, she drew a triangle on a piece of paper, and then running the pencil up one of the lines, she said—

"That is your way home, and yet you are making a complete angle, though not, in my opinion, a right one, to arrive here, and another must be made to take you to Northover."

"What is the use of all this by-line-and-by-rule measurement and your ill-natured pun, I wonder?" said the young sailor, slightly reddening. "Are you turned mathematician since I last had the happiness of seeing you?" and he gazed at her as if the word happiness meant more than a common-place compliment.

"No, no," said Lydia, gaily, "no mathematics for me—no measurings and calculatings, with AB's, and crosses, and lines, and mysterious figures of all sorts and shapes. I leave all that to wiser and more patient heads than mine," and she shook her long curls with a half-scornful gravity.

"Well, I only hope," said Fred, "that my aunt and Sir William will not make any of your triangular observations, but kindly as usual give me a bed for a night, for I must not stay longer than four-and-twenty hours, or what will they say at Northover?"

"I don't know," said Lydia, "but I say, that like a good son and an affectionate brother, you ought to be now on the right road there, after a year's absence, instead of forming the triangle I showed you just now."

"Ah!" said Fred, rather gravely, "it is very easy for some people to talk—those who——" He paused: "but it is not so very easy for some others to act in consequence. Well," he continued, rallying himself, "here I am, so do be so kind as not to scold me, at least till just before I leave you." And he was about to take her hand again, when Mornington, who had been forgotten, emerged from the deep and dark recess, and approached the party.

"My cousin Frederick Harleigh," said Louisa to the somewhat disconcerted Lover upon Trial: she was going to name Mr. Mornington to Fred, but the countenance of the latter betrayed such ill-concealed astonishment at the sudden appearance of the colossal figure now before him in his cousin's school-room, and even Louisa was so inclined to laugh at his wondering and questioning looks, that she had no power to introduce Mornington, whilst that gentleman took up his hat and prepared to depart.

"Oh!" said Lydia, "here is your drawing," rolling it quickly up in the paper she took from his outstretched but passive hand: "there—it will be quite safe," and Mornington, taking it from her, bowed and left the house.

"Your drawing-master—eh, Lydia?" said Fred, as soon as the door was shut. "What an huge man! a perfect mountain!"

"Ah!" said Lydia, "you think so, because you know, Fred, you are only five feet nine—three inches too short to be quite right; but that gentleman is not my drawing-master."

"What is he, then?" said the fiery Fred, turning scarlet through his sun-burnt skin: "and what was he doing here—in the school-room—your own sitting-room—eh, Lydia?"

Lydia smiled rather archly, but made no answer.

"He is a neighbor of ours," said Louisa, quietly; "and it seems he was ushered into the drawing-room, though my father and mother are out, so he walked into the garden, and came in here."

"Rather cool, that, I think," said Fred; "but what had he to do with one of your drawings, Lydia? for yours I suppose it was, as I know Louisa is no artist."

"I gave it him," answered Lydia.

"You gave it him!" said Fred, opening his eyes until they looked double their usual size—and fine, large ones they were, by nature. "What for?"

"Because he asked for it," said Lydia, laughing at Fred's amazement; "have I not given you a drawing, before now?"

"Yes, but I do flatter myself that is quite a different thing, for I think I have more right to possess a drawing of yours than that man can have."

"Right!" said his cousin, rather grandly; "I really cannot see what possible right you can have to anything belonging to me."

"Perhaps not, actually," said the mortified youth; "but almost everything in this world is comparative, and surely I have more claim to anything of yours than one who can be but a recent acquaintance."

"What a piece of work about such a trifle as that drawing, of which I could do a dozen in the course of a week!"

"Oh!" said Fred, knowingly and vexedly, "I suspect there is more going on here than you choose to allow. Well, no matter," and he attempted to hum a tune, but it would not do.

Louisa looked compassionately at him. "Well, Fred, the truth is, then, that—that Mr. Mornington wishes to marry Lydia, but she will never consent to that, I am sure."

"How can you be sure?" said Lydia, whose high spirit had rather resented the idea of Master Fred's imaginery rights. "More wonderful things have come to pass than would be my acceptance of Mr. Mornington. Not," added she, quickly, in consequence of a reproachful look from the sister, who ever considered the feelings of others—"Not that I believe I shall—only——" but she fell into one of her cheerful laughs, and with her irresistible manner, said:

"Come, Fred, be a good boy, and do not let us quarrel about nothing at all—for Mr. Mornington is nothing at all;" and giv-

ing a look at Louisa, as much as to say, that was true, in the fullest acceptation of the phrase, she caught up her bonnet, to join her younger sisters in the garden, leaving Louisa to pacify the unfortunate cousin, who had been Lydia's very young, but very wonderfully constant lover, for more than a year and a half, and in spite of a cruise in the Mediterranean.

Louisa—the kind but sensible Louisa—read him a gentle lecture upon the injudiciousness of coming to the Grange to gratify his unrequited feelings, and before he had been to his own home; but whilst she assured him that Lydia would, she was certain, never feel anything for him beyond cousinly regard, she comforted him with the expression of her own conviction, that though favored by her father, and persevering with the evident ardor of a man really in love, her sister never would become the wife of Mornington. But poor Frederick did not share Louisa's conviction in a way to satisfy him; and when he found from her that his rival was to dine at the Grange that same day, he was very near setting off at once on his journey home, to avoid the most disagreeable presence of the Lover upon Trial. Louisa, however, who felt how strange an appearance such a proceeding would have, and how much it would annoy Sir William, with whom he was an especial favorite, and who knew nothing of Fred's love for Lydia, though her mother guessed it, persuaded the over-excitabile youth to remain, as he had first intended; and they then joined the sisters in the garden, where Fred remained by Lydia's side, taking in that agreeable poison called love, in such a quantity, as would only aggravate his woes hereafter; but love and prudence rarely go together, especially at the early age of twenty. Why will boys at that age be, or fancy that they are, in love? There ought to be a tax on such follies: it would occasion an amazing addition to the revenue.

Frederick happened to be, for one so young, a peculiarly agreeable person. He had none of the various sorts of nonsense or affectations that too often distinguish the male sex, and the female, too, in very early life; neither had he any sailor-like slang; and he was, moreover, very intelligent, and never lost an opportunity of gaining information or of improving himself. In short, he a good deal resembled his fair cousin Lydia in character, only that he was much more irritable. Yet, as Louisa said, notwithstanding his many advantages and his known preference for Lydia, she had no fonder feeling for him than that of preferring him to the rest of her cousins; and he was not, on this especial occasion, likely to gain any ground in her affections, for he was not now like himself: he was reserved, silent, and

rather cross, and at dinner was almost rude to Mornington, in consequence of the latter's attentions to Lydia, and took little or no notice of his beloved either; and as Mornington had somewhat risen in her opinion, from his behavior about her drawing, and as she rather resented Fred's marked disagreeableness, she devoted more notice than she had ever yet given to the assiduous Mornington, who also wore a very becoming "tie," and looked less florid and overpowering than usual. But what was most in his favor was his conversation consequent upon the intention he expressed at dinner, of passing the greatest part of the next day in a visit to the fine cathedral at L——; for, although, generally speaking, he was sadly deficient in taste, yet he had his one pet—his hobby—and that was church architecture!

We believe very early impressions to be always great, often indelible; and to such did this poor lover owe his solitary bit of taste. He had been educated at W——, and circumstances had compelled him to pass more than one vacation with an old maiden aunt who lived in the town itself.

Whilst with her, he had nothing wherewithal to make his time pass tolerably pleasantly—nothing especially that could amuse an idle boy. His aunt was as kind-hearted an old soul as ever lived, and loved her nephew most dearly; but she was infirm, and a thorough stay-at-home personage. She had no garden, no dogs, no horses—only an humble wheel-chair, and a favorite and splendid tortoise-shell cat—become a very rare species of late years; but the cat was as old for a cat as its mistress was for a woman—far too old to think of a gambol with poor Charles Francis Mornington; so he at last took to strolling about the cathedral, actually for want of something to do, and watching some workmen mounted upon a perilous scaffolding, who were engaged about some necessary repairs. He soon became tired of looking at their manœuvres, and then he began to loiter about the venerable and solemn-looking pile, and ended by noticing its construction, its monuments, its chantries, and at last by admiring its vast but perfect proportions, and "its dim religious light," until he not only grew accustomed to, but enamored of the scene. His good old aunt, too happy to find the listless boy had found himself some occupation, made him a present of a work in two volumes, consisting of the history of this cathedral, and of others in England, with fine engravings, and splendidly-bound, and, "*faute de mieux*," the poor *ennuyé* boy took to the study of it—in consequence, made himself thoroughly acquainted with this cathedral in particular, and also a good deal with church architecture in general; for he was blest with a good memory

on all points that happened to interest him ; and he talked so much to his aunt of semicircular and pointed arches, of the Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, early English, decorated, and perpendicular styles, that she, good soul ! regarded him as little less than a prodigy. However, his taste and knowledge consisted solely in the architecture of this fine cathedral ; for, alas for him !—

“ The full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthems clear,”

never did “ dissolve him into ecstasies.” No ; he had no sort of taste for music !

The vacations after the second ceased to be passed at the house of the old aunt, but the impression made on his mind by his solitary walks, and observations in the cathedral remained for life ; and, perhaps from this being his only taste, he attached himself the more to it. It was like having an only child.

Mr. Mornington, warmed by the mention of L——Cathedral, and urged by Lydia, who for the first time found that they had a taste in common, talked so much, and really so well, of cathedrals in general, that his fair mistress was as much interested as she was surprised, and almost forgot, in the eagerness of the moment, to whom she was listening, and to whom in return she was also holding forth. Sir William now and then joined in, but did not say much, as he wished to encourage Mornington to talk to the utmost, although he still felt that all the party would be great losers by his silence on a subject upon which he flattered himself he could have been very eloquent. However, like a good father, he sacrificed himself for his daughter’s sake ; “ or rather,” to use his own word, that Mornington might for once appear to advantage in her eyes.

After they all retired to the drawing-room the subject was continued. Books were brought out from Sir William’s study ; and lancet windows, waving tracery, trefoils, turrets, crocketed pinnacles, mouldings, recessed porches, &c., &c., were discussed in so wonderful a way by Mornington, that Lydia felt something like a person who unexpectedly finds a diamond amongst a heap of chaff. Still she did not like to see as she listened. Pity it is that there are some persons whose faces, if one may so say, seem to gesticulate while they are speaking ; and this was the case with Mornington : his face looked to the greatest advantage in a state of repose, and so far luckily for him, that was its most usual condition.

All this while Fred swelled with ill-concealed vexation. He tried to join in the conversation, but he could not. Lydia did not

even listen to him. Gothic architecture was a subject of which he knew little or nothing. Had they lighted upon that of some old Grecian ruin—if, by accident, the remains of the once stately Parthenon had come upon the *tapis*—he could have chimed in; nay, he would quite have distanced Mornington, who had never beheld it, nor even read anything about it, and Fred had lately done both. He tried to bring it forward in conversation, but it was impossible—the Parthenon was fairly distanced. Everybody was busy with Gothic architecture and its various styles, and for once fortune was in favor of Mornington; and never did any poor soul more thoroughly enjoy, or secretly wonder at, his momentary and triumphant success, and happy had he been could he have passed the whole of the night in the prolongation of a conversation to which his fair idol “did seriously incline;” although, perhaps, she did not go all lengths with Desdemona, and wish with her “that heaven had made her such a man.” Indeed, such a one as he was, he was quite at her disposal, so the wish was unnecessary; and if, as some critics will have it, the divine Shakespeare meant that Desdemona wished heaven had, instead of making her a woman, made her such a *man*, certainly Lydia would not have chimed in: she could have no desire to resemble Mornington. That evening was the verdant spot in poor Mornington’s hitherto dry and sandy desert of love-making; it is said he never forgot its charms, and always in his own simple mind designated it as the “cathedral evening.”

Fred retired that night to his comfortable little room in a very unpleasant state of mind, of which envy of Mornington, vexation with Lydia, and a thorough disbelief in all that morning’s consoling assurances from Louisa, were the most marked symptoms. To aggravate his woes, he could hear the two fair sisters laughing and talking merrily in their joint apartment, which he now regretted was so near his own. He felt greatly inclined to rave against the slightness of domestic architecture (however solid the detested Gothic might be), which enabled persons, when desperately sad, to hear the voice of those who seemed superlatively gay. In short, he was just then so savage, that had he been able to get at them, he could with pleasure have wrung the melodious throats of two affianced nightingales, who were warbling their loving and dulcet notes to one another, within hearing of ears totally out of sorts with all harmony.

“Surely,” thought Fred, “it is too late in the season for nightingales.” Poor Fred! even natural History seemed going wrong.

“My dear Lydia,” said the kind Louisa, just as she was stepping into bed, “how well Mr. Mornington talked of Gothic architecture this evening!”

"He really did," said Lydia, whose transparent cheek was already laid upon her snowy pillow; "but I *am* so sleepy; so good-night, dearest Lou;" and her eyes closed in sleep at once. Poor Fred! had he known that, it would have been a great consolation to him.

"My dear," said Sir William to his wife when she entered the sleeping apartment—"my dear, I do think that Mornington is getting on much better with Lydia."

"Do you think so?" said Lady Middlemore, in her usually quiet manner, as she laid herself down on her bed.

"Why, don't *you*?" said the husband, rather put out by the expected favorable response being supplanted by a mere interrogatory—it sounded so much more like a negative than an affirmative.

"To say the truth, my dear friend," said the wife, "I think he has as little chance as ever."

"Well, there is no use in discussing certain points with certain persons," replied the disappointed Sir William, as he turned himself about, and arranged himself for his night's sleep; but, if the truth were known, we believe that he thought more as his wife did than he liked to allow.

The following morning's post brought a letter from Frederick's mother to her sister, Lady Middlemore, informing her that one of her children was unwell; and as there was great reason to suppose the illness was scarlatina, she had written to her son, who, she said, was daily expected at Portsmouth, if not already there, to request he would go to the Grange for the present, instead of returning home; quite sure, she added, that Sir William as well as herself would kindly take him in till she could see how all would go on at Northover. Sir William cordially assured him he was delighted to have him, although Lady Middlemore and Louisa lamented the necessity for his thus prolonged residence with Lydia. However, there was not much time for regretting or thinking, for it was to be a busy morning as it had been settled overnight that the Grange party should accompany Mr. Mornington, and do the honors of L—— Cathedral. They were to start punctually at twelve, Sir William declaring that he would be the provider of luncheon this time to the party, at their old friend the "Dolphin." Fred had asked for a whole holiday for the younger girls, so the time that elapsed between breakfast and their intended start was passed in that loitering, do-nothing, out-of-doors manner, so agreeable on a fine day every now and then, but so *maussade* and unsatisfactory if too often repeated, as I believe there is no greater misery than habitual idleness.

Fred chiefly walked and talked with Louisa, for Lydia was in

such high spirits, and seemed so much inclined to be what he called "wicked," that he felt almost afraid of approaching her; and so thoroughly annoyed was he, too, at finding Mr. Mornington domesticated, as it were with the family, that he had much more than half a mind to go home, notwithstanding his mother's known wishes to the contrary. Louisa, however, kept him under some control. She had the happy art of finding out ways and means most likely to succeed in such attempts, and that often when those of others had entirely failed; and this art took its rise in her extreme kindness and feeling for others which made her, while she remonstrated or lectured, bear gently with their waywardness and infirmities; so that, though Fred was over head and ears in love with Lydia, he was perpetually saying to himself, "What a delightful wife her sister would make!"

Mr. Mornington arrived at least three-quarters of an hour before the time appointed for starting; and leaving his steeds, impatiently pawing the ground before the hall-door, to the care of his groom, walked into the garden to join his sweet Lydia, whose voice had already reached his charmed ear; but, she having seen him in the distance, glided gently yet quickly away, and was soon lost to sight in one of the many shaded walks that ornamented the grounds. She loitered slowly along, and soon found herself on one side of a very thick and high holly hedge, from whence she heard Fred, on the other, talking so loudly that, unless she had turned away, it was impossible to avoid hearing all he said. It was the voice of anger. She heard her own name; and, half-frightened, half-anxious, she did not turn away, as she ought to have done, but walked on, and heard him say in a tremulous but indignant tone—

"Mr. Mornington, permit me to ask you one question: are you making love to my cousin Lydia?"

"Really," said Mr. Mornington, with a quietness that agreeably surprised the anxious girl, "I do not see what right you have to ask me such a question."

"The right of one who has loved her longer, and perhaps better than you have done."

"Longer, perhaps; but whether better, that neither of us can exactly ascertain."

"Well, longer at least gives my claims the better pretensions; and therefore, I must beg that you will give up attentions that I have reason to know are quite useless."

"And pray how *do* you know that to be the case?" said the poor lover, whose own misgivings made him fear there might be much truth in the disagreeable assertion."

"Oh! no matter," said Fred, at all events too honorable to

commit Louisa, "but I do believe it"—in his heart he felt he *wished* to believe it—"and therefore of course you will believe me. Do you not?"

"I do not think you have any right to ask me that question either, Mr. Harleigh; and you will therefore excuse me if I do not give you an answer to it."

"Which implies that you think I am telling you a falsehood, I suppose?" said Fred, almost inaudible with passion, whilst his conscience all the while inwardly reproached him for having uttered what was certainly very near one, for he felt by no means convinced as yet of Lydia's indifference. "Very well, Mr. Mornington, you well know how such matters end. We will arrange all that by-and-by."

"We will arrange that at once," said Mornington, with so much calmness that it annihilated all the apprehension that such words would otherwise have excited on Lydia's mind. "I quite understand you, Mr. Harleigh; but allow me say, that at my age, and reckoned, as I believe I may say I am, one of the best shots in England, I shall not for one instant allow myself to dwell on what you have just insinuated. You must be aware that, with one who is a nephew of Lady Middlemore, and first cousin to the woman I now own I value beyond my life, I could not, would not quarrel, if I could possibly help it, far less fight a duel; and here, could Lydia have seen through the thick holly hedge, she would have beheld something like a smile upon his countenance—"a duel with one so very young, and, as it is to be hoped, so perfectly unpractised in such doings. If Miss Lydia Middlemore really prefers you, be assured I shall never trouble her again with any assiduities of mine; but as you have not convinced me by any means that she has more regard for you than is natural to such a near relation, you must allow me to say that I shall go on as I am now doing, enjoying the happiness of seeing her daily, even should I not be so fortunate as to make my attentions acceptable eventually."

And here Lydia heard that his rather heavy tread sped rapidly away, leaving Fred to meditate on what he had said, who, muttering to himself some hasty but almost inaudible words, seemed to turn another way.

"Well done! well said!" thought Lydia to herself: "well, and firmly and kindly done! Yes, he must have a good temper, and command over himself; and there must be principle and resolution in that man—forbearance, too. Pity it is that there is still so much wanting in him; and I shall be so sorry to disappoint my father: but, no! to marry—and then try to love one's husband. No—it would never do. 'To love honour, and obey!'

One might force one's self to obey ; one might succeed in honouring him in some things ; but to love, unless that came of itself—no ; impossible ! Poor silly Fred ! and yet he is by no means generally so : no ! he is clever, and might be anything—everything—but so hasty ! and a little self-sufficient. Oh ! if I could but amalgamate his good qualities with those of Mr. Mornington, what a charming person could not I make out of it all !”

Then her delicate and sensitive mind reproached itself for having listened, though unpremeditatedly, to this conversation ; perhaps she ought to have turned back and heard nothing—but as it was, it might be for the best : she should tell Louisa everything, and she would be sure to be on the watch, and if necessary would lecture Fred a little in her usually quiet and endearing way.

And now, were we inclined or able to scrutinize severely Lydia's inmost heart, should we find her as, perhaps, to make her perfect, she ought to be represented—deeply distressed by the at present hopeless loves and rivalrous disagreements of these two pretenders to her favor ? or should we discover there, unowned to herself, a few sparks of feminine, perhaps natural vanity, a little gratified at thus having two admirers at her feet ? Oh ! were we able to lift up the veil that conceals the many hidden feelings from the often unkindly searching eyes of fellow-mortals, how many weaknesses and objectionable sentiments should we find, which even the owner of that heart would fain hope did not really exist there ! Yet, if he have the courage to examine accurately, he will too often be painfully forced to acknowledge, that there they are with all their evil ! Happy for us that there is, besides our own, but one Eye that can penetrate into the deep and hidden folds of that mysterious recess ; and happier still that we have encouragement to hope and believe, that He, to whom all hearts are open, will not mark to the utmost what is done, or even “thought amiss ;” for, in such a case, “who may abide it ?”

Perhaps such reflections may seem all too serious on the present occasion. For my part, I am sometimes tempted to wonder how it is we contrive to be ever anything else ; for, after all, how really serious is *life*, if we would but think so ! Indeed, such serious thoughts would not unfrequently intrude themselves into the mind of Lydia Middlemore ; for, lively and sometimes giddy as she might be, she was yet a right-minded and religious being, and the last person in the world to call “evil good,” or “good evil.” From her peculiar character, not unfrequently faulty, she was often at war with herself on account of feelings and failings that a proper sensitiveness reminded her were

objectionable; and now a rapid glance into her own heart had there detected more of gratified vanity than was altogether right. Lydia, though scarcely twenty, and having seen but little of the world, had already met with a good deal of admiration, had been made much of at home and abroad, for there was a something about her that attracted universally; and she certainly thought admiration an agreeable thing—who does not, if she will but own it?—but then she knew it was a feeling to be struggled against.

However, the fascinating girl had not time to meditate long on her foibles or her resolutions; she knew the time for their setting off was approaching, and she walked towards the house in quest of her loving sister—her best friend next to her mother. She had but just time to tell Louisa quickly all that she had just overheard, for the carriages were ready, and Lydia was relieved; and the conscientious girl was glad that she really felt relieved, upon finding that Frederick had excused himself from being of the party—that he had a letter to write to his mother, and, besides, had something of a headache, for which might have been read, heartache.

To L—— they accordingly went, without Fred the Fiery—Mr. Mornington driving his own britschka, and having Lydia by his side; but, notwithstanding that satisfaction, he was silent and rather grave. The conversation he had recently had with his young rival had not been of an exhilarating description, for it had certainly increased his preconceived fears that the chances of success with Lydia were against him. It was an awkward drive; and but for Fanny, who stood up on the back seat of the carriage the greatest part of the way, and continued chattering constantly to them both, Lydia would have found her drive rather an embarrassing one.

Luncheon at the “Dolphin” having been hastily despatched, they walked to the cathedral, calling on Mrs. Lennard on the way, and prevailed upon her to accompany the party, and lionize them over the fine building, no one being able to do so better than herself, for she was well acquainted with every part, and had a good deal of architectural knowledge. Now, Mrs. Lennard had heard of Mr. Mornington, as also of his assiduities towards Lydia, and she was therefore glad to have an opportunity of seeing, and was interested in observing him. His countenance, she immediately perceived, was by no means indicative of anything like talent, and Mrs. Lennard had great faith in physiognomy. However, notwithstanding his want of expression, she was ready and willing to acknowledge that he had quite as much architectural knowledge as herself, and much more than the rest of the

party, who were satisfied to follow their two more learned conductors, and listen to their observations on the merits and demerits, and the different eras, of the architectural varieties of the cathedral, which were discussed almost equally well; though, if there was a degree of superiority on either side, it was upon that of Mornington, who set Mrs. Lennard right on one or two points, to the astonishment of Lydia, and to the great delight of her father; and the poor lover had again the happiness of chaining down the animated Lydia's attention, and the equally great, if not greater one, of finding her clinging to his supporting and powerful arm, as he conducted her carefully and tenderly up some steep, winding, and narrow staircases and passages, and especially through the mazes of the dark crypt, until he thought its heavy and gloomy vaults wore more the look of a terrestrial paradise than that of a melancholy catacomb, or a place perhaps for concealed worship.

The day was overcast, and for some time not calculated to set off the beauty of the Gothic architecture to advantage. Not that such a building as a cathedral requires a settled brilliancy of sunlight. On the contrary, uninterrupted brightness seems too gay a charm for aught so sacred and so solemn; but still it is embellished by varieties of light and shade, which, during a permanently grey day, cannot take place. However, after they had been nearly an hour and a half examining its many beauties in all directions, they found themselves once more in the nave, when all at once divine service commenced, and the party with one consent began to move about as gently as possible, still admiring the lightness and beautiful proportions of the shafts and their arches. Lydia, however, after some time, separated herself gradually from the rest, and wandered towards a distant part in one of the side aisles, where was a mural monument which marked the near resting-place of most of the family of Middlemore for the last two centuries. The lowest name there inscribed was that of her twin sister, a sweet and lovely girl, who had been buried in that family vault about four years ago. This loss had been Lydia's first and only real sorrow, for that sister had been her second self; and, aware as she was of the extreme sympathy both mentally and bodily that so generally exists between twins, she had often wondered, and for a time almost regretted that the same lingering complaint had not also attacked and taken her off at the same time. Yes; there was the melancholy record:—

“Also, near this spot, repose the mortal remains of CLARISSA AMELIA MIDDLEMORE, aged fifteen years and ten months.”

As Lydia's eye rested on these lines, she felt at the moment

as though her sister had but just departed. She recalled, with the vivid feelings of yesterday, the last six weeks of that young life fading softly and gently away, like the fair flower which, in the bright spring-time, withers and falls from some hidden canker, undiscovered until too late to save the blossom. She again beheld the glance of those blue and loving eyes, as in their very last moments they were first upraised to heaven, as if already viewing the blessed scenes that awaited her, and then fell for an instant on her best-loved Lydia, as if to say farewell ere they were closed by irretrievable, irreparable death! Lydia fancied she felt her lips once more pressed to the cold, ivory cheek of that darling sister; and she thought at this moment, as she had thought then, how vain were all the pleasures, how trifling all the anxieties of earth, when viewed from the brink of that grave that has opened to receive one we have so dearly loved, and to whom everything that once delighted us is no longer anything. Whilst the thoughts of death and of eternity were thus filling her mind, another forced itself upon her: How pass through a world of trial without some one to love, support, and feel as she did? How could she ever bear to be taken from her father, mother, her sisters and brothers, all of whom, though in different measures, had such a strong hold upon her heart, to pass her life here below, for an indefinite number of years, with a husband who could not be all in all to her—with Mornington, in short! A cold shiver crept over her at the bare idea, which all her previous thoughts of death and the grave had failed to occasion. She felt then more especially, that, to enable a woman to marry with any probable expectation of happiness, she must be suitably married—suitably in heart, mind, and religious feelings: that the wife and the husband must not only love and trust in each other, but must love and trust in Him who at least had permitted them to be united. Lydia could not contemplate a marriage merely void of disgust: it ought to add decidedly to happiness, or in her idea it must subtract from it. "Sooner," she thought, as her eyes dwelt upon the letters of her sister's name—"far sooner be with my lost Clarissa!" At that moment, the tones of the organ and the voices from the choir fell upon her ear: it was the anthem, and it seemed to her surpassingly beautiful—almost what she could fancy proceeding from the angelic voices which Milton describes so exquisitely as songs

"That lift our thoughts to Heaven."

She distinguished no words—she was not near enough; but all was so mingled, so sonorous, so vibrating, so thrilling, that she was lost in ecstasy. It seemed almost as though she heard such

music for the first time, so keenly alive was she to its solemn, its heart-rending beauty. Suddenly a brilliant stream of sunlight broke forth from the hitherto overshadowing clouds, and, darting through the tracery of the high and beautiful windows opposite, fell directly on the monument of her family, whilst the gilt letters of that one beloved name stood out brightly and conspicuously in that flood of light. Lydia gazed upon the dazzling scene as though it were a sort of anticipation of the glory to come, that she firmly trusted she should hereafter be so blessed as to witness: the radiance of the lofty and solemn building, the rich swell of the organ, the notes of prayer and praise, all seemed combining to raise Lydia above this careful, anxious world. She clasped her hands upon her bosom, whilst tears, almost unknown to herself, fell upon them: yet they were anything but tears of unhappiness. No; for the thoughts of her departed sister were still mixed with higher ones, and she felt that she was but gone before to that "happy land" where she trusted to meet her again, never more to part. No; she experienced just those feelings that, did they but last, would already give us a heaven upon earth; feelings of trust in God—love, tender, grateful love, towards the pitying Saviour; aspirations after all that is good, and great, and holy; respect, deep and confiding, for all the wonderful but hallowed mysteries of religion, that not even the most intellectual of mortals will ever penetrate or comprehend, until they "see, face to face," the Creator and the all-blessed Redeemer of this suffering world, and no longer, as now, "through a glass, darkly." At the same time came a conviction that all is poor, hollow, and unsatisfying, here on earth, and a desire to be at once where the soul can alone and altogether be filled and satisfied with a joy and a peace "that passeth all understanding." Yes! at that hallowed and heaven-aspiring moment, the young, the lovely, and the beloved, almost longed to flee away and be at rest—at rest from struggles with her faults and failings, and forever realising those blissful and high feelings that are occasionally visitants to our worldly minds, to speak to us of that future and better country where all is pure, as it is beautiful and glorious!

For many moments Lydia was lost in mental prayer; then, as she looked around, and found herself quite alone and unobserved, she bent down to kiss her sister's name, and then she moved slowly away, with sensations such as she could only wish she could retain for ever; for are not such feelings occasional foretastes of what will be experienced by the pardoned and redeemed, when they have risen to life everlasting?

The reaction of such feelings is generally a distressing one; the

mind seems as it were to have been over-wrought, and afterwards ensue a sort of lassitude, and a void that is irksome, and perhaps painful. It resembles to a certain degree the bodily sensations following after that quantity of opium which previously occasions such exquisite enjoyment.

She was obliged, however, to rally, and again join the party. Poor Sir William was still exulting in Mornington's architectural knowledge, and secretly delighted himself in the attention Lydia had paid to all he had so well talked of and explained; but had he been able to look into his daughter's mind, he would have painfully ascertained that she had attended to him much as she would have done to the "Glossary of Architecture," or to Winkel's "History of the Cathedrals of England." He had not gained one step forward as a lover. The quick-sighted mother saw directly that Lydia looked depressed and fagged, the usual result, with her sensitive child, of any sort of over-excitement, and she proposed her returning inside the britschka with herself and Louisa, in a manner that showed she wished no objection made from any quarter. So Mr. Mornington asked the delighted Fanny to take her sister's former seat by his side, and the request was no sooner made than the active little romp scrambled up, and was comfortably placed, before Mornington had even thought of offering his assistance.

As they drove home, Lydia, who was grateful to her mother for ensuring her a quiet inside seat, leaned back in the rapidly-proceeding carriage, and, protected by her bonnet and veil, allowed her tears once more to have their course—and it was a relief to her. She could not account for it, but her heart seemed overcharged. She sat there lost in meditation, or rather in vague anticipations of the uncertain future of her life—the probability of her ever meeting any individual to whom she could trustingly confide her fate, and her resolution never to marry unless she could do so with something like a certainty of happiness.

Fred met them in a very improved state of mind; a few hours, passed *tête-à-tête* with his spirit, had given him ample time to look into himself, and acknowledge the folly and impropriety of his conduct towards Mornington. He also immediately observed that Lydia did not return in the same spirits with which she had departed, and that alone was sufficient to make his angry feelings vanish; for it told him that Mornington could not be a favored lover at present, or she would still be the happy being of the morning—nay, happier after passing so many hours with him, and having the prospect of two or three more to come. Besides, he had received the party at the door, and saw that Lydia had exchanged places with her little sister. All this was comfort to

poor Fred, and he was more in love than ever ; for, though Lydia's eyes were less bright, and her countenance less sparkling than usual, there is in some people, and it was so with Lydia, something peculiarly soft and attractive in that languid look and manner that generally follow after tears.

The dinner was spiritless, and proved how much more of the family enjoyment depended upon Lydia's life and animation than any one of that family had actually ascertained to be the case. A happy and well-conditioned family greatly resembles a good time-piece ; for how many various and variable feelings, dependent on trifling causes, are acutely felt in a family circle, although not one individual belonging to it may be exactly aware that it is some altered movement in one of the hidden springs or wheels that has given quite a different impetus to the chain that connects every separate piece of the complicated and delicate piece of machinery, which, to be perfect, should have each part, however trifling, in its accustomed order, otherwise the whole more or less will go wrong. The Middlemore family was, upon the whole, an excellent type of a good watch ; yet none of them suspected how much the little wheel, Lydia, had to do with its going briskly and cheerfully ; but so it was. When Lydia talked and smiled, smiling and talking always seemed infectious, for with her there was a charm about both not to be withstood ; and now that she was grave and almost sad, they all with one accord seemed to be thinking of and attending to her ; and Lydia was too grateful not to feel this, and knew her duty too well not to make every attempt to recover her spirits, especially when feeling a sadness which she acknowledged had no adequate cause. Now it was that the anxious lover showed his want of tact, in making most untoward and distressing attempts to enliven her, saying more than once, "He was sure that Lydia Middlemore was over-tired—that she was not in her usual spirits, and ate nothing, although they had had luncheon so long ago that she ought to have a very good appetite ;" the want of which, he modestly thought, was most deeply to be regretted at a table where so many good things presented themselves. In short, the poor soul was over-officious and obtrusive with his anxieties, whilst Fred, on the contrary, shone on the occasion ; for he talked as much as possible to take off the general attention, and Mornington's, in particular, from Lydia, and was also so peculiarly *empressé* towards Mornington, desirous to show him that he had come to his right senses, and appreciated that gentleman's forbearance towards him in the morning, that Lydia soon rallied, and gave Fred some of her most bewitching smiles to reward him ; whilst, to enliven her still more, he gave such ludicrous accounts of two or three

adventures he had had during his cruise, that before the dessert was over, he set the whole table in fits of laughter, Lydia amongst the number : so that, if Mornington *had* advanced a little in Lydia's good opinion, by his pleasant and improving discussions upon Gothic architecture, he lost this trifling advantage by his want of tact, though he guessed it not.

Alas ! what "trifles light as air" affect too often our likings and dislikings ! How frequently does a mere nothing, as it were, make an impression upon our too-easily-biassed minds ! Is not this wrong ? Should we be thus influenced by comparative trifles ? What right have we mortals to expect so much from our fellow-men when we look into ourselves ? *when*—for how seldom do we that ! but when it does occur, must we not see the thousand failings, if not serious faults, that must make us, in our turn, unpleasant to our neighbors ? But there is the mischief ! We look for perfection in others, although *we* by no means strive to attain it ; and, whilst we accuse them of faults, we are ready with excuses if we happen to see anything amiss in our beloved selves. The great but over-scrupulous Pascal has affirmed that we ought never to wish to be loved, for that there is not one of us that has any one quality sufficiently excellent to deserve affection. We cannot go quite so far with him ; but still, if like him we were convinced of our own individual, as well as of general evil, we certainly should be less exacting towards others, and less annoyed to find that there is not all that we wish for in those who surround us. But it is all very well to talk philosophically, and even morally, on this subject : religion alone can give the harity that can "cover a multitude of sins" and failings. Lydia had not yet advanced so far in "the one thing needful"—*practical* religion is often long in coming to us.

Fred's sister had taken the scarlatina, but so slightly that there was no anxiety on her account ; but still he was not, from prudential motives, to join his family until they removed to the sea-side, whither they intended to go as soon as the little girl was convalescent. So he was to remain at the Grange, nothing loth. Lydia had been particularly requested to visit, accompanied by her father, the new library at Highwood, and to take what books they both might like to read—a privilege too delightful to be refused. However, Lydia, with all her little imperfections, had much genuine feminine delicacy ; and she represented so forcibly to her father how entirely she shrank from putting herself in the least forward, whilst every chance, she added, was against her accepting Mr. Mornington, that he was persuaded of the propriety of her "maidenly modesty," and therefore went one morning, accompanied by Louisa and Fred, to Highwood

Park, for the purpose of examining "the *small* gentleman's library." Fred behaved his very best, being determined to atone for his former folly, to the utmost—which Louisa observed and admired. Had she discovered the lucky cause for this amiable behavior, she would have thought it less praiseworthy, inasmuch as the effort was a slight one, if any, as Fred had nearly arrived at the consoling conviction that Lydia was perfectly indifferent to his rival, and he imagined, was most likely to remain so. If all the hidden motives of our actions were fully known, what would too frequently become of their supposed merits?

However, it must be owned that Fred was not particularly pleased to observe, on their return to the library, Lydia's very excellent view of the water-mill and its surrounding pretty scenery, more splendidly than tastefully framed, and hanging in a most conspicuous situation. He did not like to think that every sort of person, naturally attracted by it, would probably ask what it was, and by whom done; and that in consequence it would be said by everybody that Lydia liked and encouraged Mr. Mornington; and such an idea was most vexatious to poor Fred. He thought the placing the drawing, so glaringly framed, in so prominent a point of view, showed a want of delicacy, and he at first felt ready to fret and fume upon the slightest occasion; and, in all probability, these irritable feelings would have vented themselves in some way or other, had he not heard the supposed culprit say to Sir William, that the library was his own morning sitting-room, and that he never received any one there but his steward: so Fred again became good-humored. Louisa selected, at Mornington's earnest request, half-a-dozen different works she was sure Lydia would like to read; and then they all went over the house together, as Mr. Mornington wished to consult Sir William about some changes he contemplated making. It was already so excellent a house, that it seemed to them as if no alteration could improve it. Fred, too, began to fear, as he roamed through it, that, after all, Lydia might hardly be able to resist the satisfaction of calling such a place her own, and sighed to think that there was a possibility of her yielding to the temptation. Sir William sighed too, but it was as the idea presented itself that she was most likely to resist it. Louisa was struck, it is true, with the excellent and delightful situation of the mansion, but equally and disagreeably so with the gaudy splendor of some new furniture that its owner had lately put up—yellow, too!—the color Lydia so thoroughly disliked. Malvolio's stockings could not have been more odious in the eyes of the majestic Olivia, than furniture of that hue would certainly be in those of

the fair Lydia. Had the shade been primrose, pale straw-color, or a rich and deep amber, it might have been endurable; but this was a decided yellow—a species of buttercup or dandelion yellow, not to be pardoned; and then there was, at the same time, an awfully red carpet, which was a most painful amalgamation of hues. It was evident, too, that of the arts he knew nothing, which might have remained secret had it not been glaringly betrayed by a collection of pictures, selected for him at a high price by some foreign cheat, who had persuaded the ignorant Englishman that these most abominably daubed copies were fine originals, and for which he had paid a most original price. Alas! poor man! not all Sir William's wish of pleasing Mornington could enable him, with any decent approximation to truth, to say they were even tolerable. Besides, Sir William was a good enough connoisseur in pictures, upon which he greatly prided himself; and for worlds he would not have compromised his judgment and taste so far as to compliment his hoped-for son-in-law upon these detestable specimens of the noble art of painting.

The books were collected, and were to be sent by a servant; but as Sir William proposed that Mornington should walk back with them, they next went to the conservatory, that the lover might select an exquisite bouquet for Lydia, which he carefully placed in a basket, and insisted upon carrying himself. The party entered Sir William's grounds by a side-gate, at which he left them, having some little business to transact in the village; and the rest walked on to the house by the lawn, and found Lydia under the verandah, seated on her own favorite low chair, with a book on her lap, reading so intently that, until they were quite close to her, she had no suspicion of any person's approach. Her straw-bonnet lay on the ground beside her, and her long luxuriant curls partially concealed her face, which rested on one hand; the other was in the act of turning a page. She would have made a prettier picture than any poor Mornington had in his collection. So thought Fred, at least, who had a far better taste for the arts already than had his senior by at least ten years.

The flowers were presented to the disturbed reader, and graciously and delightedly accepted; for even Mornington could never be totally unwelcome with a nosegay of such superlatively lovely flowers as those he now brought!

"Delicious! beautiful!" said Lydia, placing the basket on her knees, for which she had already displaced her book; "they are as lovely as I imagine the flowers to have been that Eve tended."

"Eve!" repeated Mornington; "what Eve?"

"Why, Adam's wife, of course," returned Lydia, looking somewhat surprised.

"Oh, yes!" said Mornington, rather abashed; "but I thought perhaps you might be alluding to the heroine of some new novel. Those sorts of names are so fashionable now in novels—Eve, Eva, &c."

"Oh!" said Lydia, "when we simply speak of Eve, we of course always mean the first woman."

"Though not altogether the first of women, I think, considering what she did," said Fred, laughingly.

"Fred," returned Lydia, with one of her pretty and expressive grave looks, "you must know that jokes or *jeux de mots*, are not the thing on such subjects." Then she repeated, with her melodious tones—

"O flowers
That never will in other climate grow!
My early visitation, and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names:
Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial feast?"

The lines sounded so beautifully, repeated as they were to perfection by her soft voice, and there was something so pensively touching in her countenance, that there was a momentary pause from admiration.

"Those lines," said Lydia, "are, if I may so say, fraught with such a domestic and home-felt feeling, that I never could read them without my sorrow being increased for her own woes."

"Oh! they are very pretty, certainly," said the matter-of-fact Lover upon Trial; "but perhaps, after all, she never did any such thing as they describe."

"Not tend the flowers in Paradise?" said Lydia, rather reproachfully.

"How can we tell that she did?" asked Mornington. "She might not be so passionately fond of flowers as yourself."

"You know, of course," said Lydia, "where we are expressly told of Adam even, that he was put 'into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it;' so, surely, it is more than probable that the 'help meet for him' assisted him in so doing."

"Now, I should think," said the too pertinacious Fred, "that Adam was far too gallant and careful of Eve to allow her to turn gardener."

Lydia was silent, but she sent him one of those looks of hers that gave him a very painful sensation, and he wished he had not again uttered such words of levity.

Mr. Mornington was silent too, because he was rather puzzled. He certainly remembered the garden of Eden, and that it was

the abode of our first and erring parents ; but of the texts she quoted he had not the slightest recollection.

"Well," continued Lydia, whose thoughts, continuing in the same channel, made her again turn to the sublime poem from which she had recently quoted, "were I compelled to select one only poet for my perusal for the rest of my life, sorry as I should be to be restricted, I should not one moment hesitate in choosing Milton."

This was what Mornington regarded as "a transition" he could not altogether account for (it not being a Gothic architectural one), as having no idea from whence the lines quoted had been taken, never having read the "Paradise Lost" but once as a duty, when quite a boy ; and as he had almost forgotten that such a poem existed, it may make it a little less wonderful that he was rather perplexed.

"Yes," continued Lydia, "the delight I felt—I think I might almost say the benefit I derived—from reading 'Paradise Lost,' for the first time, when I was just thirteen, I never can forget ; and still the same pleasure is it now. I always arise from the perusal of it in some degree approaching to the same state of mind as when I have been reading the Bible—feeling all the better for it. Do you not admire Milton, Mr. Mornington ?"

This was putting a question, indeed, point-blank.

"Why, I don't know ; perhaps I might now, especially if I were to hear you read it aloud ; but, when I did read it, and that is some years ago, I believe I did think 'Paradise Lost,' rather heavy, and too long ; but then my taste was not formed—I was a mere boy."

Lydia felt terribly inclined to smile, but made a great effort and preserved a proper degree of gravity ; but she exchanged a quick glance with Louisa, whilst Fred was delighted to think how much the poor man was injuring his cause.

Fred declared that, though of course he did admire Milton, more especially perhaps his "Comus" and "Lycidas," yet he must own he was all for Shakspeare. Such a variety of character, such insight into human nature, often such keen remarks, so much fun and real humor—genuine humor, only known to the English—that he should choose him for his only poet, above all the Miltons in the world.

"Yes, yes," said Mornington, hoping he had found an ally in Fred, "I agree with you. The 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' for instance—that is a capital play. When I was at Rome there was an English party there, who got it up amongst themselves. Lady S—— herself was 'Mrs. Page ;' and such a pretty girl, her daughter, was 'Anne Page.' Yes, she went by the name of

'sweet Anne Page,' all the rest of the time she was at Rome. To be sure, Sir Charles T—— managed badly with 'Falstaff,' which he insisted upon playing, for he actually is as thin as a lath; and if he contrived to stuff himself out with wadding and clothes until he was nearly suffocated with heat, and could hardly move from the weight, yet nothing could stuff out his face, which looked so woefully thin and wan that it was a most preposterous contrast to the apparent bulk of his figure. To be sure, in the basket scene I thought we should all have died of laughing; for ——"

"I can't imagine," said Fred, interrupting him, "how any ladies could possibly think of acting in so coarse a play as the 'Merry Wives of Windsor;' your pretty girl would never have been a 'Sweet Anne Page' for me."

"Really," replied Mornington, "Rome, after a week or two, is such a dull, gloomy place—one gets so tired of seeing those eternal ruins, and the Coliseum by moonlight, and all these sorts of grave things, that one is glad enough to have something to enliven one—something to cause one a good hearty laugh."

"Oh," said Lydia, "I cannot fancy wanting anything to enliven one in any part of Italy; that country, of all others, I have always so ardently wished to see; both of us so long for it—do we not, Lou?" nodding affectionately at her sister. "Why, I quite envy you your having been at Rome."

"Ah!" said Mornington, looking rather gravely important, "it is all very fine in imagination, but very different in reality—to leave all one's English comforts behind one—to find so few where one goes—to find such difficulty in having a tolerable joint of meat, unless one has one's own English cook—missing the thousand things one meets with at home, where one never thinks about them. Then all those eternal made-dishes, with the impossibility of finding out of what they consist; and the insipid light wines! Then at Naples, eaten up by mosquitoes, and sometimes, when it does turn cold, starved alive in those monstrous palaces, all over marble, without a good English grate to warm one's self at, or, in the hottest time of the year, unable to stir out till almost dark—to say nothing of a constant sort of apprehension of that tremendous Mount Vesuvius, which no doubt you," and he looked at Lydia, "would delight to witness in a state of eruption, but for which I confess I had no taste."

Here Lydia laughed outright, and was joined by the rest of the party, and then the gentle Louisa said—

"There must be some drawbacks to encounter everywhere, I suppose; yet the delight, and also the advantage, of seeing foreign countries must be great. Going beyond the limits of our own

narrow circle enlarges the mind, and adds to our stock of ideas, which it is so difficult to increase if we never see anything or anybody beyond it."

Lydia nodded approvingly to Louisa, as much as to say, "Go on;" but Mornington gave her no time for doing so, as he said directly—

"And what should one have those ideas for, I should like to know? I do not see that one gets any good by new ideas. They do not make one feel more happy and comfortable in reality, I presume, than one's old ones. I, for one, do not feel a bit happier for having been at Rome, and Florence, and Naples, except from the conviction that I am no longer there. New ideas give rise to new plans and new systems, and I am convinced they often do more harm than good."

Lydia remained silent: she thought it an absolute waste of words, not to say of patience, to try to controvert such opinions.

"And then," continued Mornington, who seemed inspired with energy on the subject, "those foreign doctors, some curing, or more often killing, with cold water and their wringing wet sheets; others with boiling baths, or all mud; some with gallons of half-ripe grapes, or perhaps tumblers by the dozen of nasty mineral stuff, which you drink expecting to become as big as Falstaff, of whom we have been speaking. Then, worse—at least more absurd than all—those globule-givers—medicines the size of a small pin's head. What humbug! But as for finding a doctor who will give you a good English dose of medicine, or, if you are weak, orders you to keep yourself up with solid beef and mutton, or some glasses of good strong ale, it is an impossibility: you cannot meet with such a man, unless you are fortunate enough to light upon one of our own country—and some there are everywhere abroad, I know; but when they have been long practising amongst foreigners, they get into their foolish ways, and only do their business by halves."

"So much the better, I think," said Lydia, at last. "If the practice of our physic-loving, medical men becomes but modified by living abroad, I am sure their patients will be all the better for their change of practice."

"I am always sorry not to agree with you," said poor Mornington, "as I am aware you are more likely to be right in your opinions than I am in mine. Still I always shall think, that if my poor father, instead of running about from place to place, and trying so many various modes of cure from those foreign physicians, had kept to old ideas and systems, and remained here quietly under the care of Dr. Lennard, or even good old Price, he might very probably have been alive at this moment.

and I should be happier than ever I could be from having gained new ideas on foreign countries." Lydia secretly doubted the acquisition he implied; "for," continued Mornington, "so good and so kind a friend I fear I shall never have again, for a better father never lived;" and here he paused, and turned away his face to hide the emotion he felt, and which proved the sincerity of the filial feelings he had expressed. All respected those feelings, and Lydia, who was a creature of impulse, stretched out her fair hand towards him, but said nothing; whilst he, quite overcome with so unlooked-for a kindness, seized her soft hand, and this time held it so firmly that without a struggle she could not have released it, and raised it to his lips. Annoyed beyond expression, she blushed crimson deep, whilst Fred, whose heart the moment before had quite softened towards him, felt a sudden revulsion take place in his feelings; and becoming as red from anger as Lydia did from shame, walked away with a contracted brow to some little distance.

"Pity that such a kind heart as Mr. Mornington's evidently is," said Lydia to her mother that same evening, as they happened to be alone, "should not be joined to a finer, at least a more cultivated mind; for you know, dear mother, one could not pass a life with a person so devoid of almost all that constitutes the charm of daily and hourly intercourse."

Lady Middlemore smiled thoughtfully, but said nothing.

"Mother, continued Lydia, earnestly, "you always seem to shrink from giving me any opinion on this unlucky affair."

"My dearest child," returned her mother, with much feeling, "I have promised your father not to influence you in your decision, and you know I always adhere to my promise; and it is more especially my duty so to do when it is one that has been given to your father; but I feel secure that on such an occasion as this my Lydia will act judiciously. You know my opinions of marriage, and the duties and responsibilities it entails upon us, so well, that it would be quite superfluous in me to repeat them. I see you are acting fairly and honorably by both your admirers, and my mind is consequently at ease. I had once my fears"—and here the mother's countenance betrayed one of those half-smiling, half-searching looks that a mother's eyes are alone capable of—"that my Lydia had a little tendency about her towards coquetry. I do not mean," she continued, kindly observing the eager and somewhat distressed glance of her child, "in the worst sense of the word; only a little too much inclination to be pleased with admiration. But, however that may be, I am comforted to observe it is kept in subjection, if not quite annihilated." Lydia took her mother's outstretched hand and kissed it.

"However, I must remind you," continued lady Middlemore, "though without attempting to influence you, that real worth and kind and affectionate feelings go an immense way towards ensuring the happiness of any woman, even if, like my Lydia, she sets her heart upon intellect as well as excellence. Believe me, and remember what I tell you, dearest, that all the talent in the world, without a really good heart and good principles, would utterly fail in making a wife happy."

"True, mamma; but a certain degree of intellect must accompany the excellence which is so necessary, or a wife would herself sink into a sort of nonentity, even had she any little ability of her own; for evil and good seem to me to be equally contagious. Think of the pains you and my father have taken with us all; how much you have read and talked with us; given us tastes, and pleasure in cultivating them; and how sad it would be if all you have done for us were to be eventually lost by our marrying stupid or illiterate men. I have heard you say, that there are parents who bring up their daughters with no other view but to become as attractive as possible in looks and manners, merely with the hope of their settling down in life with any man who may chance to like them, and who is well off as to station and fortune. But that has not been our case, and thus I hope, if ever we do marry, our husbands will be able to go on improving what you have so kindly and carefully begun;" and here the affectionate and grateful girl threw her arms round the beloved mother and gave her one of her warmest kisses.

The mother was inwardly moved. "With such feelings, my child, you cannot fail to do well. Married or unmarried, you will, with a mind like yours, still have your enjoyments; for one that is really cultivated, and is also anxious to feel its powers advancing, will always be capable of much gratification. Still, Lydia, it is my firm opinion that married life is, generally speaking, the best lot for woman, and I would advise you even now not to be over-hasty in your decision."

"Well," said Fred, as he was sitting with the two elder sisters, the morning after their conversation with Mornington about foreign countries and new ideas, "certainly, Lydia, your new admirer is not a genius."

"Certainly, Fred," said Lydia, rather wickedly, "my old admirer has not made any great discovery."

Fred frowned for a moment, but continued: "How can you let the man dangle on after you in this way day after day, acting as if he were over head and ears in love, and ——"

"Acting!" interrupted Lydia. "What should he play the hypocrite for, I wonder? Do you really think he does not care about me? I suppose you judge of others—" but she stopped before the severe and undeserved remark passed her pretty lips, glad that she had checked herself. "Come," she said, sweetly, with one of her winning, half-beseeching smiles, "do not let us, old friends as we are, dispute about Mr. Mornington. I am only doing what you wonder at to please papa, who lives in hopes that I may accustom myself to him enough to like him at last; but that will never be. Believe me, I care no more for him—nay, not half so much as I do for you, or any of my other cousins."

These last few words spoiled all the little pleasure of the preceding ones for Frederick.

"After all," said Louisa, "he has evidently some very amiable qualities. I think his understanding is naturally a good one, but his education has not been sufficiently attended to."

"Woefully neglected, rather," said Fred, "to speak of things as they really are. A man who can ask, 'Of what use are new ideas?'—why, he is scarcely fit to live: certainly not fit for civilized society."

"Come," said Louisa, laughing, "that is severe indeed: and after all, Fred, how many persons on an average are there, think you, who care not the least for new ideas, only they would not, like Mr. Mornington, have the honesty to confess it?"

"I agree with you, Lou," said her sister, who seemed rather inclined to oppose Fred. "I really think Mr. Mornington is an amiable, well-disposed person, and might have turned out in all respects far beyond what he is now, under more favorable circumstances. Papa says he superintends all the planting and the improvements in his grounds and park himself, and is becoming quite an adept in anything that concerns farming, agriculture, and all that is necessary to be understood by a man who is desirous to improve an already fine property in the country; yet all this is quite new to him. It is also very clear that he is a kind and warm-hearted man."

"Then, for heaven's sake," said the vexed Frederick, "become Mrs. Mornington at once, only do not expect to see me at such a wedding;" and out of the room he bounced, slamming the door after him with such vehemence that everything in the room vibrated.

"Well," exclaimed Lydia, half-frightened, half-laughing, "I am sure I pity Fred's future wife, whoever she may be, if he does marry, with that irritable temper of his. I would not marry him for worlds. At all events, dull as he is, I never could be afraid of Mr. Mornington." And, with these impressions on her mind,

she went soon after to prepare herself for dinner, a rather large party being that day expected at the Grange; and, as Mrs. Lennard was to be one of it, Lydia looked forward to the evening with much satisfaction,

Lydia, it must be confessed, in spite of her father's love of punctuality, was too often late; and so it was on this day, as she entered the drawing-room just as the dinner was announced; and, without having time to address any one of the assembled party, found herself seized upon by Mr. Mornington, who had placed himself close to the door that he might, like a spider in its web, fasten upon his victim the moment it appeared. This was not a pleasing circumstance, and there was no possibility of avoiding it; but, as she found herself also very near Mrs. Lennard, who was seated on one side of her father, she was tolerably well resigned to her destiny, for she would at least be able to listen to her conversation. She looked to see where Louisa was placed, and found she was seated directly opposite to herself, and, to her surprise, by the side of a total stranger, a striking-looking man, of about two or three-and-thirty, whose presence she could not account for, as her mother had forgotten in the morning to mention to her daughters that Dr. Lennard was unable to come, in consequence of being called away to a patient in great danger some miles off, and that Mrs. Lennard had written word that, in his stead, she would bring a friend of theirs, just arrived to pass a few days with them at L——. Lydia saw that Dr. Lennard was wanting, and also soon made out, by something Mrs. Lennard said to Sir William, that Mr. Falconer had come with her, and thus easily guessed the cause of this strange but not unpleasant apparition.

Mr. Mornington was more than commonly talkative, and, what was worse, more than commonly assiduous; for he was quite convinced his fiery young rival was indifferent to Lydia, and that had again given him some little encouragement—nay, poor Mornington was on the very confines of tenderness—she looked so pretty, it was very excusable—and every now and then said such very plain things, that Lydia became embarrassed and blushed, and felt that she did so, which is a miserable conviction, and only increases the mischief. Happily for Lydia, hers was that sort of delicate and rare complexion that neither blushing nor flushing—two things which young ladies usually consider as misfortunes—could injure: it only changed the rose-bud into the full-blown flower; and which of the two was the more attractive it might be difficult to decide. Once, soon after she had set down to dinner, she looked opposite and saw Mr. Falconer speaking to Louisa, though his voice was too much in a whisper to be

heard; but Louisa immediately looked at her sister, and then answered Mr. Falconer, which plainly declared that he had been inquiring who she was, whilst he fixed his eyes upon her in a way that was as embarrassing as Mornington's too expressive sentences. Lydia had by no means an undue portion of vanity—personal vanity in particular; but it was hardly possible for one who had even the smallest share of it not to suspect that she had made a decided and immediate conquest of this good-looking stranger, albeit he was placed by the far more beautiful Louisa. His eyes were constantly turned upon Lydia, and he evidently talked with great carelessness, and with many pauses, to his lovely neighbor. Mr. Falconer's eyes were so fine and so scrutinizing, that poor Lydia's fell beneath his almost perpetual gaze; and she was vexed to feel how ill she stood it, as she did not wish him to perceive that she observed it. Then, too, Mornington seemed determined to take up her attention exclusively; and his manner was so *empresé* and so marked with devotion to her, that she was sure everybody must notice it.

As the party was rather a large one, the conversation was divided amongst different sets; and, amongst the constant hum of so many voices, Lydia could not hear that of the stranger, who seemed to speak in a peculiarly low tone, particularly as Mr. Mornington was perpetually addressing herself exclusively. At dessert, however, when the servants had finally withdrawn, there was rather less noise, and then she could hear her friend Mrs. Lennard talking to Sir William upon the subject of mesmerism—a subject in which, although he had no faith, he was too gentlemanlike and too courteous to turn into ridicule, especially when it was in some degree supported by one with such mental powers as Mrs. Lennard. Mornington, who now found that Lydia was giving her whole attention to the discussion, gave his also; and, as he was near enough to take part in their conversation, he did so, making no ceremony of giving his opinion and of laughing at the whole business, in that disagreeable way that makes ridicule so provoking to those differed from, and especially when that ridicule is handled by total ignorance or decided prejudice. Mrs. Lennard, however, who soon saw that her gothic-architectural friend was not equally *fort* on other topics as he had been on that one, did not appear in the smallest degree annoyed by Mornington's insipid jokes: not so Sir William, who was, with all his foibles, a thorough gentleman, and who consequently regarded Mornington's manner on this occasion as highly deficient in good breeding, especially when a lady, and such a lady was in question. As for Lydia, she felt quite indignant at his proceedings. Mrs. Lennard, however, taking advantage of a momentary

lull in the general conversation, said, whilst she elevated her naturally clear and sonorous voice so as to be heard by all the party—

“Mr. Falconer, pray come to my assistance on the subject of mesmerism, and do let us hear something of those two extraordinary cases you were beginning to tell me of this morning; for here is Sir William Middlemore courteously doubting, and Mr. Mornington openly laughing, at the power I believe it possesses.

Mr. Falconer was rather a reserved character, and by no means in general a great talker; yet, with all his reserve, he was not shy. What should a barrister, and a very clever barrister, too, have to do with shyness? So he gave Lydia one of his long looks, and then, with a deep, full, mellow-toned voice, did exactly what Mrs. Lennard requested, and with such powers of language, and in so clearly and explanatory a manner, that all he described seemed actually passing before the eyes of the listeners; and he detailed the wonders, whether true or false, of that strange apparent power, upon the reality of which so many wise heads differ in opinion; while at the same time he spoke of his own difficulty in believing it, its inconsistencies and contradictions, the almost impossibility of getting at the truth of it; of the danger he thought might accrue from such an extraordinary power, did it indeed exist, until the attention of every individual then assembled at Sir William's table was riveted upon Mr. Falconer, whilst they were all equally fascinated by his eloquence.

Even Mornington's disbelief was much shaken, and he lost all inclination to ridicule the subject; indeed, there was that in Mr. Falconer's manner and conversation that would have quite prevented the faintest inclination to laugh at anything he could say. Lydia was as it were bewitched. The subject was not at all new to her, for it was one which had been lately a matter of much controversy in some of the leading periodical works which had fallen in her way, and which she had often discussed with Mrs. Lennard, it being of the sort most calculated to seize upon the ardent imagination of such a girl as Lydia.

Mr. Falconer, thus at once forced upon general notice, was not allowed again to retreat into his shell of reserve, his few detached sentences with Louisa, or his long gazes at her sister, but found himself henceforth obliged to take the lead in conversation, which he did, though in a perfectly easy and unpretending way, like one who had been quite accustomed to do so. Lydia was peculiarly struck with his language, possibly because it afforded so vivid a contrast to what she was accustomed to from her father—and nothing strikes like contrasts (there are those who, almost unknown to themselves, are always making them—

Lydia being one). Mr. Falconer's language flowed on without the slightest effort, whilst he had not one moment's hesitation; yet every word he happened to use seemed to be exactly the right one—nay, the only one—precisely adapted to his meaning, and which, had he studied for hours which to choose, would have been just that which he seemed accidentally to have selected. His pronunciation, too—a thing which we perhaps are not sufficiently careful about—was, without any affectation, so clear, so graceful, so soft, yet, from the power and depth of his voice, so totally devoid of all that might savor of ultra delicacy—that there was a charm in it that partook almost of the harmony of music. Lydia had set with her elbow on the table, one cheek resting on her hand, with downcast eyes, as if contemplating the pretty porcelain plate before her, for she could not venture to look at him—taking in with delight his charming tones, and all that was at the same time so well worth her best attention.

At last he paused. She withdrew her arm, looked up, and there were those large dark eyes again fixed upon her. She could hardly stand it; but fortunately at that moment Lady Middlemore rose, and the next Lydia found herself in the drawing-room. She felt as if a sort of spell were broken, and, for the first time probably in her life, she did not rush up eagerly to Mrs. Lennard to have an enjoyable *causerie*, but sat down close to one of the open windows, looked out upon the soft, fine evening, and thought over all she had been listening to, of him to whom she had been listening, and of that earnest gaze which had been so constantly turned upon herself. Poor Mornington! he did not gain by a comparison with her acquaintance of the last hour—nor Fred either; pleasant and animated as was the latter, how far did he fall short, in powers of conversation and mind of Mr. Falconer! Then, too, he was so very, very good-looking; so much the gentleman, the distinguished gentleman—and to a few, that is in itself so great a charm!

Mrs. Lennard was surprised at Lydia's secession from the party, and, going up to her, put her hand gently and kindly on her shoulder. This brought Lydia to herself, and the blood to her cheeks, with a more vivid glow than she felt was desirable; and this, added to her observations at dinner, and to various reports that had reached her, strengthened Mrs. Lennard in her suspicion that Mornington was not altogether an unfavored admirer of her young friend; but as Lydia herself had never alluded to the subject, she had too much delicacy to ask her any questions, although she was inclined to wonder at it. The gentlemen soon joined them, but Mr. Falconer did not seat himself by Lydia, as she hoped, perhaps expected; although, when he

entered the drawing-room, there was a vacant seat close to her. Had he, she thought, observed Mr. Mornington's assiduities at dinner—those vexing assiduities? How tiresome, that she was compelled to go on enduring them! she had never felt them so truly irksome as on that evening. Mr. Falconer, whilst these thoughts passed through her excitable mind, had placed himself opposite to her, near a round table covered with books and pamphlets, and opening one of the latter, he appeared to be reading; but though his hand shaded his eyes, she felt certain, such is the quickness of woman's glance when interested in observing, that instead of reading, he was again contemplating her through his slightly-parted fingers, for not a single page did he turn.

Mrs. Lennard was called upon to sing. Her singing was remarkable. Her voice was, for a woman, peculiarly deep, but not masculine—for, though powerful, it was melodious, and her accompaniment perfect; and having a thorough knowledge of music, she always made her own to the simple style of song she usually chose. A few chords or a light running accompaniment was all she indulged in, and that was always quite subordinate to her voice; so that her energetic, feeling manner came forth with double effect; and without any affectation, there was something quite dramatic in her style. She sang—and the music was her own—those lovely lines, probably well known to many:—

“Oh! weep not for the dead!”

And with such deep feeling and clearness of enunciation that nearly every word was audible, so that when she ceased, there was scarcely an eye in the room unmoistened. Her song was encored, and the same charm prevailed; but when she came to the words—

“Mourn rather for the doom
Of those who struggle on,
Midst weariness and gloom,
Until their task be done—”

which she uttered softly and touchingly, a loud and sonorous snore resounded through the room—so loud, and so sonorous that Mrs. Lennard, taken by surprise, stopped singing quite involuntarily. All turned their eyes towards that part of the room from whence this snore was repeated, when, behold, in the most remote corner, ensconced in a luxurious arm-chair, slept Charles Francis Mornington, Esq., of Highwood Park, the Lover upon Trial! A shout of laughter burst from every individual, with the exception of Mr. Falconer and Lydia. He had turned his eyes with a scrutinizing look upon her. What did that look

express? A feeling probably of surprise and pity that such a man as Mornington could be permitted to pay her attention—a man who could sleep and snore in society, and, still worse, who could sleep and snore when such music was going on; for even Falconer, accustomed as he was to hear all that was perfect and enchanting in that art had thought, as Mrs. Lennard sang—

“Did ever mortal mixture of earth’s mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?”

And then he had looked at Mornington, as if expecting to see him turned into one of the rabble-rout that appeared to the sweet, spell-bound lady-singer whose powers these lines expressed.

Mornington—poor, tasteless man! aroused suddenly from a most sound and comfortable sleep by that irrepressible burst of laughter, stood up and “grinned horribly a ghastly smile,” for such it certainly was, between sleeping and waking, with some degree of shame—for he felt what an indecorum he had been guilty of, and before Lydia too; so he blundered out a thousand apologies, accompanied by another thousand wonders, how he could have been so remiss, under such aggravating circumstances too; and he sought for refuge by taking a chair close to Lydia, but she, annoyed by his want of all proper decorum, and vexed to think that possibly Mr. Falconer might fancy her capable of liking his attentions, rose, at the same moment he seated himself, and placed herself on an unoccupied sofa not far from the piano-forte. Then it was that Mr. Falconer, with a brightened countenance, immediately joined her, and for nearly an hour Lydia was in the full enjoyment of his most delightful conversation, and under the influence of a manner that could be, as then, when pleased, so eminently attractive, though at others, when perfectly uninterested, cold and indifferent. There was also such a charm in his countenance—the eyes and forehead full of deep thought and reflection, yet blended with a little sternness; but every now and then such a soft, affectionate-looking smile—a smile that seemed to convince the observer at once that, if he ever loved, it must be so fondly, so fervently! Then it was so gratifying to see how thoroughly he seemed to appreciate her conversation, apparently trying to make his own merely subservient to hers, and with a view to drawing out her opinions and sentiments upon the various points in discussion; indeed he listened almost too attentively, and Lydia almost shrank from the conversation. How closely she attended to every trifling expression she uttered! for she had found out that he was the well-known and highly gifted barrister, whose name she had

occasionally seen mentioned in the public papers, as being so eminent in his particular branch of the law.

Mrs. Lennard, before the party broke up, was requested to sing again, and she chose a German song she had lately heard, and which was quite new to Lydia: it was most beautiful, and tenderly touching, and when it was ended, Lydia took up the song to endeavor to make out the words, as she had for some time been studying German, and had made some progress in it; but this poetry was too hard for her. Mr. Falconer, ascertaining what she was about, took the song and said he would translate it for her, with the greatest readiness, and with his subdued but full-toned voice he construed it into prose so beautiful that versification could hardly have given it greater attraction. It told of the fascination of eyes of heaven's own blue; of sunny, clustering locks, of the winning smile that was in unison with the speaking eye; of the graceful, supple form, the melting voice, all combined in that fair, but sensitive and shrinking being, who would hardly permit her timid lover to look even upon her charms: so like the shy gazelle did she turn from his oft-repeated gaze. And when the translator had ended, his own oft-repeated gaze was renewed. "Strange coincidence," would have thought any other listener but Lydia, "between these wild sweet words, her own appearance, and his observant glances!" Certainly the last part of that coincidence did not fail to strike herself. She rose, from an indefinable feeling of delicacy to leave him, and replacing the song upon the piano-forte, stood there instead of returning to the sofa: but he immediately rose and stood opposite her, for there was now no room to stand by her, as she was between Mrs. Lennard and Louisa. The latter now requested Mrs. Lennard to explain the words of the song to her, for, though being a better German scholar than Lydia, she was able to make out a great deal, yet there were lines she could not clearly understand.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Lennard, "they are like the words of many of this sort of songs, hardly worth explaining—they are strange and almost incomprehensible. I doubt if the poet himself quite understood them, which by the way is a thing I not long ago heard one of our well-known English poets confess of some of his own composition. The soul is supposed to be holding a conversation with the body; telling its complaints of satiated or unsatisfied feelings; of aspirations after the stars and angels; finally entreating the body to unloose the chains that bind them so uncongenially together, and allow it to fly away to another and brighter system than this our world belongs to, and so on."

Had Mr. Falconer, whilst this true translation was going on,

moved away to hide any embarrassment he might naturally feel at the falsity of his own being proved to Lydia? No; he stood calm and unconcerned, turning over the music that lay on the piano-forte. Nay, he even gently raised his eyes to encounter Lydia's surprised and involuntary glance, and if his did express anything, it was but as if he meant to deprecate the astonishment he saw betrayed in those "eyes of heaven's own blue;" and astonished Lydia certainly was. What! had he invented all that, as a flattering description of herself—for so she must now regard it—and followed by his almost declaring himself her lover?—yet *timid* lover, was certainly an erroneous epithet. What were her feelings? Who can say? She felt as if she were in a dream!

At last all the party went away, excepting Mrs. Lennard and Mr. Falconer, as by some mistake the carriage of the former came later than the others by three quarters of an hour—a mistake which even gratified Sir William, with all his love of punctuality and eleven o'clock bed-time; for it was not often he could converse with such a man as Mr. Falconer, whose powers he was fully capable of appreciating. So, again, the latter charmed away the time, and all regretted when the carriage was at last announced. Just as they were going away, Mrs. Lennard said to Lady Middlemore—

"I wish you on Thursday to lend me Lydia for a few days. There is to be a public concert at L——, and some of the very best Italian singers are to come for the occasion, whom Lydia has never heard, and I want so much to take her with me."

Lady Middlemore courteously turned to her husband: Sir William did not much like Lydia to absent herself just now; but Mrs. Lennard was a favorite, and she had listened to him all dinner-time so patiently, or, as he fancied, so admiringly, that she was more than ever in his good graces, and he could not refuse her.

Lydia smiled with delight—she met Mr. Falconer's eye—he smiled as if equally delighted, and thus they parted.

Did the two sisters talk over the past dinner-party when they retired to their room for the night? was all spoken of unreservedly? all dwelt upon with equal interest, and equal wonder by both? Yes; for they had every thought, though not every feeling, in common—their two characters were so different: they viewed the same thing often in such an opposite light, and yet ever felt for each other, as if those feelings were the same. There was indeed plenty of cause for a long, confidential talk, that night. Louisa—the reasonable, considerate Louisa—almost satisfied her more ardent sister in the admiration she certainly

felt for Mr. Falconer, but she freely blamed his pretended translation of Mrs. Lennard's German song.

"It was an untruth," said the right-minded girl; "and what did the untruth mean?—surely not a real declaration? Surely Mr. Falconer cannot be the sort of man to make and declare positive love to a girl whom he had only known during three short hours; but even if mere admiration, it was expressed and shown in too presumptuous a manner. And it is unaccountable, too; from the little I saw of him at dinner, I should have said he must be a man of a served nature: besides, his staring at you in that manner—such admiration is of too bold a character; do not heed it, Lydia."

Lydia kissed her adviser, laughed off the affair, but thought of it more than perhaps was prudent.

Thursday came. Poor Mornington and poor Fred! Both felt Lydia's departure; but the former said he should certainly go in for the concert, and should hope to see her there.

Sir William drove her over to L——, and on the road took care to tell her that he hoped she was still looking into Mr. Mornington's evidently excellent disposition and character, and that she would not be in too great a hurry to give her decision.

"Dear papa," said Lydia, half in jest and half in earnest, "how long a time do you insist upon my taking for this examination?—a month from the day you first told me of his proposal?"

"Really, Lydia," said her father, giving his sufficiently spirited pony a very unnecessary touch with the whip, "I cannot exactly calculate the number of days, or perhaps weeks, that may be sufficient to enlighten *you* on this subject; but I know you are rather apt to hurry your decisions on most points, and it would be a grievous pity were you to do so in this instance, as Mr. Mornington's character is not one that is very striking or brilliant at first sight." ("Nor at second sight either," thought wicked Lydia, "for his pleasing qualities, I am inclined to think do not altogether lie on the surface.")

"Certainly not, papa; but let me say one thing, that you may not be disappointed at my ultimate decision, as I feel pretty sure as to what that will be. I will give Mr. Mornington credit for many substantial good qualities; but still I must confess that, even if they were proved to be essentially such, it would be much the same with me as when I have to choose a dress. I would not choose it unless it were of good material and I could depend on its wearing well; but then there must be that about it which altogether pleases me and that I quite fancy, or I should reject it. Now, though my allowance is very limited, yet I can afford to have more than one gown; but I cannot afford to have

more than one husband—at least at one time; and thus I think I am doubly excusable in not choosing to marry a person of whom I can only think solidly well, and who is in everything the reverse of what pleases my taste. Come, dear papa, now confess you did not select mamma merely for her good qualities, her strong sense, her excellent heart—did you? Were you not a *little* bit influenced by her beauty and agreeableness? eh, papa?”

And Lydia looked up in his face with such an arch and lively smile, that Sir William was truly glad that they happened to be stopped by the only turnpike between the Grange and L——, and taking a longer time to pay than usual. When the deed was done, he hastened on, but did not renew the delicate subject.

So Lydia was left with her friend, and never had she yet thought that friend so delightful and so kind, or the house of which she was the mistress looking so cheerful and pretty, or the weather, which set off all, so bright and exhilarating. The house belonging to Dr. Lennard was just at the entrance of the town, but quite detached from all others, and had a large and really picturesque garden attached to it, which Mrs. Lennard had made the most of, and from whence was seen some of the fine country which surrounded L——with the far-off hills beyond. The small but pretty suite of sitting-rooms looked upon this, and moreover were furnished with good though simple taste, and there were a piano-forte, books, drawings, and various little works of art, all well chosen and well arranged. Lydia knew the rooms perfectly, and had ever delighted in them, but thought that until now she had never done them ample justice. Mrs. Lennard, too, seemed so glad to have her, and Lydia was so truly fond of her. It is, generally speaking, as great an advantage for a girl so young as Lydia to have a friend many years older than herself, as it is too often a disadvantage to have one of the same age. Very juvenile friendships are so frequently founded on so slight a basis, and so often made up of mere gossip and trivialities, the fosterers of them are so apt to think that it is a thing of course, that every petty, idle fancy or feeling must be mutually communicated and looked over, which, if they would bear to hear the truth, I could tell them were far better buried in silence; and the youthful friends, in consequence of the uncertainty of their minds and want of due discrimination, are so prone to turn frivolous things into subjects of deep interest, that I am tempted to believe many girl's character has actually deteriorated in consequence of a long course of this mentally relaxing system; whereas, when a very young girl forms a friendship for a woman very much her senior, there will naturally be found in the latter, provided she has tolerable sense, a certain counteraction to the weaker tendencies

of the younger one's yet unripened reason and unformed character—the elder having probably passed through and left far behind those shoals of frivolity and nonsense on which the slight bark of the youthful voyager on its outset is so apt to split—shoals not the less to be avoided because they are apparently of no magnitude, and in such shallow water as may lead her to suppose she can see to steer easily through the danger. Lydia had never had any friends out of her own family except Mrs. Lennard; and we do not hesitate to declare that she was all the better for it, and that both mind and heart were probably in a more healthy state in consequence. We are quite aware that far more than three-quarters of the “gay ladies of England” would be in arms against me, should they happen to read this my assertion; nevertheless, were I even to encounter so powerful and firm a phalanx, I should still hold fast to my opinion.

Mr. Falconer was out when Lydia arrived, and she did not see him until they met at dinner. But what an agreeable dinner that was! for did ever trio more thoroughly enjoy—perhaps we ought only to say, seem to enjoy—themselves? for, after all, how often is not the most vivid enjoyment merely apparent! Mr. Falconer's powers of conversation were surpassed only by his almost boundless information; and though so clever, so very superior, how evidently interested and pleased did he not appear with all that Lydia uttered! Her kind friend, too, who was proud of her abilities, showed her off to advantage, though without any ostentatious effect, merely leading her to converse upon subjects on which she knew, young as she was, she was equal in her turn to shine. Then, between dinner and tea, they sauntered in the pretty garden, and Lydia could not complain that the glories of an evening sky were lost upon Falconer, as they had been upon Mornington. How differently did he talk upon the distant lands he had visited, the immense enjoyment he had derived from his travels, and how thoroughly he seemed to have investigated and reasoned upon all he had seen! for he confessed he had traveled slowly, and seen less of the Continent than he might have done, that he might not view what he did see superficially. And then he deprecated the rage that exists for publishing descriptions of Continental travels, often issuing from the pen of those who have had neither time nor power to become acquainted with anything but what was on the very surface.

“I do hate the superficial,” he added, “and more especially the superficial author; but I only whisper this to you both,” he continued, laughing, “in the safe solitude of this quiet garden. I know innumerable authors, and I am inclined to think that half the scribblers of the present day *are* superficial; so I should

have a whole army of them upon me if I were openly to declare such an opinion. And yet," he resumed, after a moment's pause, "this opinion of mine has been in their own superficial style; for one moment's reflection tells me, that as no one author would think *himself* superficial, no one individual amongst them, consequently, would quarrel with me on account of my opinion. Each of them would feel himself safe," concluded Falconer, laughing.

In the evening, when lights were brought and tea over, Mrs. Lennard persuaded Mr. Falconer to read to them; to which he readily consented, and turned Lydia to choose something for him. She named Milton, her favorite, but insisted that Mrs. Lennard should select what best she liked from his works, and she chose "Comus." That was an exquisite treat to Lydia. She knew it nearly by heart, and never was his manner of reading it forgotten by her—*era un incanto*.

Before they parted for the night, Mrs. Lennard sang two or three of Lydia's favorites. Lydia went to the piano-forte, Falconer did not follow her, but his eyes did. "Ah!" said Lydia, when her friend had ceased, "why has nature denied me a voice? What would I not give to sing!"

"Your speaking voice is music," said Falconer, coming near her; "do not wish for so much!" And as Mrs. Lennard rose to light her candle before leaving the drawing-room, he added gently, "You are already only *too* charming."

Lydia felt—how she exactly felt I cannot tell, but she rose suddenly, took her candle also, collected one or two trifles she had left about, and then, gaily bidding him "good-night," she quietly retired to her comfortable sleeping-room, though perhaps she thought more than she slept that night.

The next day passed equally pleasantly. Mornington called in the forenoon, and Mrs. Lennard, who, believing there was some decided understanding between him and Lydia, thought it would be right to ask him to dine, and go with them to the concert; and he did so, to Lydia's great vexation. Mornington was but too happy to go. But Doctor Lennard dined at home, and as, out of attention to the strange guest, he talked chiefly to him, Lydia was released from what otherwise might have been his too constant assiduities.

The concert was delightful, for some of the most perfect music was warbled by two of the very first Italian singers of the day; and whilst Lydia was almost breathless from intense listening, there were those large, half-loving, half-searching eyes bent upon her—every now and then quietly withdrawn, it is true, when she seemed to observe them, but only to return again with an expres-

sion of too deep an admiration to be misunderstood. Seated by her side, he seemed to feel the charm of the music nearly as much as herself, unless indeed, it was another sort of charm that excited his feelings; all his remarks betrayed the most perfect taste, and refined discrimination. Between the two parts of the concert, which occupied rather a long interval, instead of stupid gossip, he amused Lydia with a sort of short but spirited history of music, dwelling particularly on the extraordinary effect it was said to have upon the minds of the ancients, more especially the Greeks, whilst his immense reading enabled him to bring forward numerous instances in confirmation of this fact, most of which were unknown to the pleased and listening girl. "Oh!" she thought, "were Mr. Mornington but another Falconer!"

And what became of Mornington? He had secured a place on the other side of Lydia, but neither she nor Falconer seemed to attend to him any more than common civility required, whilst he, poor soul! could not but observe the pleasure Lydia experienced in talking to, and being talked to by Falconer; and thus the concert was so many lost hours to the Lover upon Trial, and gave him more pain than pleasure. Mrs. Lennard had two or three agreeable people near her, with whom she conversed when there was any interval between the music, so that Falconer had Lydia entirely to himself. When the concert terminated, he looked as if he regretted it, and said he thought he had never attended so short a one, although, in truth, it was remarkable for its length.

Lydia had not been aware how keen the enjoyment of existence could be, until the occurrence of these few happy days. Mr. Falconer was so constantly with them, and there was so much of that sort of conversation, that apparently gives such real insight into character and opinions, that at the end of the third day Lydia felt as if she had known him for months; for, in the society of Mrs. Lennard and Lydia, both so delightful in their various ways, Mr. Falconer threw aside all reserve, except such a portion as he thought desirable, to prevent his expressing certain sentiments that in the presence of one so very young and guileless as Lydia, he would not perhaps have liked to own. As Mrs. Lennard had the promise of Lydia for a week, she was to stay till the following Thursday, and though Mr. Falconer had originally said he must positively leave L—— on the Monday, he now, of his own accord, offered to stay a few days longer, as he said, "he found he could manage it," and fixed to leave them on the Thursday morning.

Doctor Lennard's distant patient continuing in a precarious state, he was more with him than at L——, so the trio were left

chiefly to themselves, and seemed to want nobody else. On the Sunday they went to the cathedral. Lydia prayed more fervently than usual; she was so happy, and so grateful for feeling so. Mr. Falconer told Mrs. Lennard afterwards that her *recueillement* and evidently true devotion during the service, was enough to make the greatest skeptic in love with prayer. She realised to him, he declared, those lines in "Il Penseroso"—

"With looks commercing with the skies,
Her rapt soul sitting in her eyes."

After service was over, as they walked slowly up and down the aisles of the beautiful cathedral, and as Lydia passed the mural monument of her family, and glanced at her dear departed sister's name, she wondered that when she gazed at it last, she had almost wished she had been buried by her side. "How could she wish to leave this delightful world?—a world where there was so much to enjoy—people whom she could like and look up to, and listen to, and find herself improving every hour."

Monday was a thoroughly rainy day; no possibility of driving or walking. Was it internally as dull as externally?—far from it. Mr. Falconer said he must go and visit the cathedral thoroughly; and as it was not very far, he persuaded the ladies to put on thick cloaks and stout shoes, assuring them he had an umbrella *monstre*, that would protect both of them from the rain. And thus accoutered, they accompanied him there, nothing loth. Mr. Falconer said he knew nothing of Gothic architecture, although to prepare himself for this visit, he owned he had been studying Mrs. Lennard's best works on the subject for a couple of hours every morning since he had been there; and they were both quite surprised at the way he had already mastered all that was most essential to the knowledge of this his new study, and that what he had learned was clearly arranged in his head, and seemed to give him no difficulty in applying it to what he now saw. He was much amused at their surprise, saying that he had all his life been so used to work his mind, that it had got accustomed now to any task he chose to set it. "We are such creatures of habit," he added, simply, "we may do almost anything, if we will but think so, and accustom ourselves to apply." He made the most, too, of his inspection, getting Mrs. Lennard to explain to him much that of course he could not as yet know anything about; and when they returned home, he sat down to his architectural books, taking care, however, to have Lydia by his side, "just to help him a little."

The days fled rapidly, and Thursday came far too soon for one, perhaps for all the party. But Mrs. Lennard had on that morn-

ing one of the bad nervous headaches she was subject to, and remained in her own apartment; so that Lydia and Mr. Falconer breakfasted *tête-à-tête*. Falconer was grave and rather absent, and looked at her less than usual. Soon after breakfast, he said that he must pack up his things, as he had brought no servant with him. Lydia remained alone for a time. She took up "Comus," looked over a great part of it, remembering *how* she had heard it read so lately, and shutting her eyes, fancied that evening all over again, and almost thought she heard Falconer once more say, "Do not wish for so much: you are but too charming already." Poor Lydia! such reminiscences, particularly at her age, were very excusable. At length she heard his footsteps approaching, and with a conscious feeling she rose and put away the book, yet standing before the shelves as if in search of another.

Falconer walked straight up to the window, looked out, then at his watch. "Nearly my time," he said, in a low voice; then, after a pause, he walked quickly up to Lydia, and said—

"My friend, Mrs. Lennard, took me to task yesterday, convicted me of, I fear, a fault; and I am come to ask your pardon for it."

Lydia felt surprised and confused.

"She had observed," he continued, "that I looked at you very often and very long. *She* says too often, and too long, and told me that such a proceeding must give me the appearance at least of presumptuous rudeness."

He paused; then added—

"I told her the cause—a most excusable one, *I* think; and now I am come to confess it to you, earnestly hoping you will also think it equally so."

Lydia bowed her head slightly, but did not speak; she wished she did not feel her heart beating as it did: but she was full of—what? hopes, and fears, and expectations.

"The first moment I beheld you," Falconer continued, "I was fascinated—fascinated as in the common acceptation of the word any man might be—with Miss Lydia Middlemore; but *I* was doubly so: for my heart is in the possession of one, fair and lovely as yourself, and of whom you happen to be a most remarkable likeness, and to her my hand is promised, as soon as some difficulties can be smoothed that prevent the immediate fulfilment of my wishes. "See," he said, rather hurriedly, and taking from beneath his waistcoat a small miniature, "if in the likeness of my Selina, you do not almost recognise your very self?"

Poor Lydia! what a revulsion of feelings had one short moment occasioned—what an unlooked-for termination to her recent vague

surmises—what a singular conclusion to such a happy week—a week of such devotion to her on his part! However, she had command over herself, and taking the miniature in her hand, she turned away as if to get more light, as the room was much shaded by the curtains and blinds, happily for her. Strange! there was a marvellous resemblance, though not a perfect one. The face she gazed upon was on rather a large scale, though somewhat handsomer than her own, but the latter difference might arise from the flattering style which is almost the inevitable result of miniature painting; for even the ivory is in itself so softening, so delicate a groundwork, that it alone must embellish. There was perhaps a little more shade about the eyebrows, and the hair might be a trifle darker than her own, it also gave the idea of one some few years older than Lydia, yet altogether it was most strangely like—the same transparent complexion, the same long clustering curls, the same shaped mouth, and the very red lips. The expression, too, was such as Lydia fancied her own might be when looking grave. She turned it mechanically. On the other side was a thick plait of brown hair, and in the centre, the name of “Selina,” in tiny seed-pearls.

“Now,” resumed Falconer, more easily, “you can understand, and, I trust, pardon my too frequent gazes”—he dared not say “my marked attention to you,” though he perhaps thought it. “If you are still unforgiving, I must entreat Mr. Mornington to mediate in my behalf.”

Lydia returned the miniature, and said quietly, but firmly, “Mr. Mornington has no earthly influence over me, so pray let me undeceive you, if you have so misjudged on that point.”

“Indeed!” said Falconer; “well, then, I may say I did hope—nay, *believed*—there was nothing in what I heard.”

A change passed over his face, and one impossible for Lydia to understand; thoughts seemed passing through his mind which he either could not or would not utter. At last he added—

“But the time will come when some more fortunate man will influence your feelings, and you will then understand the fervor of that irresistible passion which has mastered me. When I tell you I have not beheld this dear one,” and he held out the miniature, “for many months, and when I almost fancied whilst with you I was once again in her presence, and was listening to her voice, you will hardly wonder that I found it difficult to take my eyes from her living likeness.”

“Say no more,” said Lydia, rallying courageously, and in a cheerful tone of voice; “I ought to be too much flattered to feel angry at being considered like anything so beautiful.” Yet, when she thought of the false translation, and of a whole week’s

unremitting attention, she did think she might have some reason for such a feeling ; but she would sooner have died than insinuated as much.

The carriage was now heard coming up to the door.

"Well then," he replied, "we part, what I sincerely trust we may always remain, the best of friends. If I am ever so fortunate as to have the first wish of my heart fulfilled, I shall look forward to the happiness of renewing my acquaintance with yourself—may I dare call it friendship?—and of introducing you to one who would not fail to love you—as, indeed, who could ? I, for my part, shall never forget this week, one of the most agreeable of my life, and which has only passed too quickly ;" and here he took her hand, and adding, "May I venture for the first, though I will hope not for the last time?" he raised it to his lips and kissed it affectionately—nay, passionately. Who that had beheld him at that moment but would have thought that fair girl herself was the chosen of his heart ? Lydia gently withdrew her hand.

"And now, adieu ! Do you know," he said, forcing a smile, "it is quite painful to me to tear myself away. Had not I this," and he replaced the miniature in its usual resting-place, "I know not how I could quit her other self, for I know not when I shall see *her* again."

He was about to take her hand once more ; but he saw in a moment that she did not intend that he should, so he relinquished the attempt.

"Good-bye !" said Lydia, cheerfully, and looking gaily at him ; "good-bye : I must beg to be remembered to my most flattering likeness ;" and thus they parted.

Lydia felt "a change come o'er the spirit of her dream ;" for surely, she thought, she must have been in one ever since the day Falconer dined at the Grange—a bright but deceitful dream. And so it was her likeness to another that had made him admire her so much, and show his admiration so unreservedly. Was it right ? she thought ; was it considerate ? He had confessed that he had more than doubted there being any engagement between her and Mornington. Yes, he must have had penetration enough to discern that she was indifferent to him ; and thus he risked making an impression on one who had no idea of any engagement on his part with another ; for who that witnessed his manner towards herself would have supposed such a thing possible ? Still the recollection of all his most agreeable and striking qualities was uppermost in her mind ; and the thought that, had there not been already that sweet Selina, she might, she would have won his heart, shot through her with a tolerably sharp pang of

regret. Then for a moment she thought of Mornington. Poor, honest soul! it was a useful contrast for him, that which she drew between the Lover upon Trial and the lover of Selina. She had been for a whole week domesticated with a being in whom was united, apparently, almost all those requisites she had communicated to her father, on the day she was first informed of Mornington's proposal. "Notwithstanding what my father said, *such* men do then exist!" she said to herself.

Before dinner, which was an early one, that Lydia might drive home in the cool of the evening, her friend was sufficiently recovered to join her. But Mrs. Lennard looked upon a very different Lydia to the one from whom she had parted the preceding evening. In spite of every effort, her tell-tale countenance and varying complexion betokened that some struggle was going on within. Mrs. Lennard was a very decided person, and never shrank from doing what she thought for the best, because it might happen to be irksome.

"My dear Lydia," she began, "I hope Mr. Falconer, before he went away, explained to you, as he did to me, the very singular cause of his marked—I could almost call it unpardonable—notice of yourself. I say unpardonable, though you may think the word harsh, because, whenever a man allows himself, if only from mere admiration, to stare a woman out of countenance, I regard it as quite reprehensible: it is a liberty no man has a right to permit himself to take, but an accepted lover."

"Oh, yes," said Lydia, as carelessly as she could, "he explained his strange behavior, and we parted good friends. Of course it would have been very injudicious on my part, had I made it a matter of any consequence, even if I"—she paused, then added, "Moreover, I thought it due to myself, as he adverted to reports that had reached his ear respecting Mr. Mornington and myself, to tell him what I now repeat to you, dear Mrs. Lennard, and what he confessed he had believed, that I am under no sort of engagement to Mr. Mornington."

"Shall I say then, dear Lydia, that I am truly glad of it? I cannot think he is a desirable husband for such a girl as Lydia Middlemore; but how comes it that appearances were so much in favor of this report?"

Lydia then told her how anxiously her father desired the match, and how he had prevailed upon her not to decide against him until she had seen more of him.

"And Falconer told you that he never thought there *could* be a feeling of interest on your part?" She paused, shook her head, and looked thoughtful.

"Yes," said Lydia, still forcing herself to speak unconcernedly;

"he said that he had hoped—nay, had felt almost sure—that there *was* nothing in what he had heard."

"Mrs. Lennard saw, and did not like, her constrained manner; for she was certain that there was a lurking sadness beneath it; and taking her hand, she said—

"My dearest Lydia, had I not imagined that Mr. Mornington was in a fair way to be an accepted lover, if not already such, I think I should not have allowed myself to ask you to come to me whilst Mr. Falconer was here. He is a clever, and at times even a fascinating man, when he throws off that mantle of reserve he is so apt to wrap himself in, with people who in no way interest or amuse him. As I knew not until now of his engagement, I should have thought him a very likely man to fall in love with you; and, therefore," she added, smiling, "you with him which I should have much regretted."

"Regretted!" Lydia could not help repeating.

"Yes, regretted, at least *your* preference. He has, as you have discovered, many attractions and some engaging qualities; clever and agreeable beyond any man I have almost ever met with, although I have known many; but——

Lydia anxiously awaited the objection.

"But though, hitherto, I believe not an immoral man, I am sure he thinks little of morality's only sure foundation—religion. I do not mean that he is a sceptic—I know to the contrary; but he labors under a terrible error in my opinion. I wish, though I deprecate their creed, that I could say he was a Calvinist; for then, however erroneous to my mind would be his belief in predestination, yet he would probably have more seriousness than he now has; but he is a thorough Fatalist. No Turk, I do believe, has a more decided conviction of the utter uselessness of contending against what *he* calls destiny. He believes we are altogether the creatures of circumstances; that little or nothing can be done to contend with the faults of natural disposition; and as, amongst the various branches of knowledge he has studied, anatomy is one he has attended to at intervals, he has come to the unfortunate conclusion that our faults and weaknesses depend almost entirely upon our peculiar constitution and formation, and that thus we are but slightly answerable for those excesses which are, as he says, the result of our individual idiosyncracies. All this sounds in his mouth, with the learning and eloquence which come to his aid, very plausible, especially to the ignorant and half-enlightened; and, though it is a sophistry as futile as dangerous, yet I should be sorry any girl I was interested in should marry a man on whose firmness of principle she could, *I* think, have so little reason to rely; for a person who

can bring himself to be really and truly a fatalist, I should expect might do anything, however wrong. His, too, is a doctrine most dangerously convenient for one not unlikely to be carried away by his passions, which, though seldom outwardly displayed, yet I believe exist in great force, and if once vehemently excited, how, with his doctrine, could he ever resist them?" She paused a moment, then added—"Lydia, dearest, never think of any man as a husband to whom you cannot cling, not only with fond affection, but with perfect confidence in his principles."

Lydia drew a long breath, paused a moment, then with sweet and winning frankness said—

"My dear, kind friend, I see by your penetrating look, and by what you have been now saying, that you are afraid Mr. Falconer has made something of an impression on my mind—heart, perhaps *you* would say. I will candidly confess that to a certain degree it may be the case. I never happened to meet with so delightful and agreeable a man; yet, as I am confessing all to you, I will now say I do think his manner towards me has been inconsiderate and ill-judged. One would almost fancy he wished to make such an impression, engaged though he is."

And then she told her friend of his so-called translation of her German song, and all he had said to make her believe he was thoroughly captivated by her.

Mrs. Lennard's brow contracted more and more as Lydia went on, and she said, at intervals—

"Wrong, very wrong; vain, selfish; imprudently selfish."

"And now," continued Lydia, "I thank you for all you have said to me so kindly, so opportunely. I think it has"—she corrected herself and said—"I think, at least, it will soon eradicate my unlucky predilection for so engaging a person. I value talents and intellectual power beyond every thing *but* excellence—moral and religious excellence; and, as you truly say, no woman could look up to her husband with anything like comfort and confidence without it. And yet," she added, with a charming frankness that went straight to the heart of her friend; "how fortunate it is, after all, that I have not been tried by a proposal from such a man! Should I ever, with the knowledge of what you have just told me, have had the strength of mind to have refused one so—I *must* say—so captivating? Ah! I have already learned to mistrust myself;" then, after a few minutes' pause, with one of those quick transitions of thought and countenance that gave such an irresistible charm to Lydia, she said—

"And yet, if I esteemed the other—I mean Mr. Mornington—ever so much, I never could bring myself to be *his* wife. It would be to me as bitter as the tonic that Dr. Lennard once

would make me, take;" and here she cast one of her own arch glances at Mrs. Lennard, who rejoiced to see her, as she hoped, becoming herself again.

"Whilst Mr. Falconer would have been the sparkling champagne that would have excited your brain, but have left you enervated afterwards, it is a thousand pities," added Mrs. Lennard, continuing to speak more gaily than she really felt, "that there is no means of an amalgamation between tonics and champagne, that one might reap the benefit of the one and enjoy the exhilaration of the other at the same time. But," she added—becoming more serious again—"perfection in man or womankind is not to be thought of, though unluckily there are some who are always looking for it, and I am afraid my Lydia is one. However, though I much fear that you will think I have been preaching a regular lecture—which is what I hate doing, or having done *to me*—I will add that there is no reason why you should marry a stupid man, because it may be difficult to find a brilliantly good one. I would not for worlds have you tied for life by a chain of dulness to so heavy a man as Mr. Mornington evidently is. Either never marry at all, than marry to wish yourself afterwards single a dozen times in the day."

And Mrs. Lennard fell into one of those grave, half sad looks that formed the most usual expression of her fine countenance.

Lydia had a solitary drive home, for which she was not sorry. Her heart and mind were full—painfully so—and solitude in consequence was rather welcome to her. How different were her feelings in returning home, to those with which she had left it! She was then looking forward with delight—now backward with something very like disappointment. There is a sort of blank left in a woman's mind when the attentions, the constant, flattering attentions, of a very delightful man are irrevocably terminated, which is generally felt, even when the affections are not actually implicated—how much more, when to a certain degree they are!—when that woman is on the very brink of attachment!"

And such was Lydia's case; but she had a strong and a right mind. She felt she had had a wound in her heart; but she confessed to herself that it was too recent, and she hoped too slight, not to be shortly healed; for, although her feelings were vivid, Lydia was neither sentimental, nor prone to give way even when those feelings were concerned. She also, more or less, took herself to task for feeling so much as she certainly did for her fascinating, but very recent acquaintance. How different had *he*, instead of Mr. Mornington, proposed for her! There would not have been any need of a long trial in the necessary investigation into his

character. She should have been too delightfully dazzled to have delved into the foundation on which such an enchanting superstructure was elevated. But it was all for the best, though a disagreeable best, yet she would struggle with her regrets. Had she not much to be thankful for?—so happy a home!—such a dear family! Still she *did* feel sad. But she would rouse herself; she would forget. “Yet, no, Mr. Mornington,” she said to herself decidedly; “in Mr. Falconer I have seen all that would have made married life delightful, as far as I could know of him; but to encounter one so totally unlike him, and to live with such a person for life—so heavy, so uninteresting, so unimproving to one’s self—as Mr. Mornington! No—impossible! quite impossible!”

Then the idea crossed her mind as regarded Falconer in general, that perhaps Mrs. Lennard was too severe upon him for his erroneous opinions. “We cannot help having our own peculiar view of things,” she thought; “and when it comes to the important question of what is preordained, or foreseen, or, as *he* would say, *fated*, who can exactly say what one ought to think? Neither does it altogether follow that he should not be able to resist temptation, because he *leans* to such a way thinking, or believes that constitutional defects have something to do with the disposition. Then immediately *Reason* whispered her that he had not resisted the slight temptation of almost making love to her when he ought not; and then she thought Mrs. Lennard was right, and she feared that perhaps he was not altogether the strictly conscientious man he should be. “But who,” thought poor Lydia, “is altogether truly conscientious? Well, I believe—I try, at least, to believe—all is for the *best*!”

Such thoughts as these passed in quick succession through her mind as she journeyed homeward; but still the burthen of the song was, “No Mr. Mornington for me!” However, she this time kindly added, “Poor Mr. Mornington! and poor Fred, too!” for

“A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind.”

Lydia was comforted and revived at finding herself once more in her happy home; for those who are so blest as to possess such a home are never altogether without consolation, even when pressed down by real and heavy sorrows: how much more so when, as in Lydia’s case, the distress was comparatively slight! though we all know there is no exact line and rule to proportion our feelings by; and more is the pity.

When she arrived at the Grange, all met her at the hall-door but Fred, who had been unexpectedly obliged to return to Portsmouth, of which Lydia was glad, as, in spite of a little tendency

to take pleasure in admiration, at this moment he was a satellite whose constant attendance upon the sun he worshipped would have been really irksome. And as for poor Mornington, who was already there to welcome her back, she would have been too happy, if I may follow up the astronomical simile, had he resembled those comets which, having arrived at their perihelion, set off on their hyperstatistical progress to such a boundless distance, that they are never known to return ! But unluckily for her, his orbit was a most limited one, and his reappearance could now be easily calculated, even to a nicety.

Of course, all that had passed at L—— was soon told to Louisa, who, in her straightforward manner, expressed her disapprobation of Mr. Falconer's inconsiderate conduct. Yes—straightforwardness: it is a first-rate virtue, and need not be the matter-of-fact, plodding quality some people may choose to fancy it; for straightforwardness is, after all, mere *truth*.

Lydia sighed, said nothing, but affectionately pressed the dear hand that held her own. What could be said? The less the better. She tried to look on that delightful week merely as a dream, too charming to be ever realised.

Lydia's mother soon saw that her darling had not recovered her usually buoyant spirits. She did not question her, but gave her so gentle and easy an opening for confidence, that the tender and watchful parent was soon acquainted with all that had passed. Lady Middlemore was much more sorry than she chose to appear at the impression Mr. Falconer had certainly made on her daughter's ardent mind; not that she thought the feeling was of so deep a nature as would last for a very great length of time; but she did regret that Lydia had come within the sphere of so highly gifted a being—a man generally known from his splendid talents, and universally appreciated; for he had naturally appeared as “some bright particular star,” shining with double splendor in the eyes of one who had as yet seen few with any talent at all. Lydia's mind thirsted after knowledge and improvement; already one of her greatest enjoyments was that of agreeable conversation; and, as she was not likely to meet with another Falconer, Lady Middlemore would have been better pleased had her enthusiastic child only guessed at such a character, instead of having witnessed and appreciated his powers to the utmost. Perhaps the anxious mother would not have deprecated this acquaintance so much, had Falconer not paid such unremitting attentions to her daughter—attentions quite sufficient to excite expectations and hopes that his tardily-confessed engagement with another could never allow of being fulfilled. The mother felt he was to blame, and her heart ached

for her daughter's disappointed feelings ; but there was no use in lamenting and regretting, and she could only hope the impression would be neither deep nor lasting.

Mr. Mornington came daily, and Lydia felt she could not endure this much longer. Mornington's few fond hopes began rapidly to die away, and he came to the melancholy conclusion, that if in a few days' time Lydia's coldness did not give way, he would give up his suit altogether, and accept the invitation he had received from a friend of his to make a walking tour with him through Scotland. Poor Sir William, too, was becoming almost hopeless on the subject : he feared everything for the Lover upon Trial.

The weather had lately set in with such extreme heat that the sisters used to pass the greater part of the afternoon under the shade of some of their fine trees, sketching and reading aloud, and often interrupted by the romp Fanny, whose wild frolics not unfrequently tried their patience a good deal. One of these burning afternoons Mornington joined them under this favorite clump of trees, and found Lydia drawing and Louisa sitting by her ; while Fanny and Flora were occupied near them in their different ways. A review lay on the ground ; and as Lydia felt peculiarly disinclined to talk to Mornington, she requested him to read to them an article in the journal in question, which they were on the point of perusing. It was on a historical work they had lately read with great interest, and they were desirous of hearing what was said of it by one of the most influential periodicals of the day. Mornington obeyed, of course, but very unwillingly. He read aloud indifferently, but perhaps most people do ; and as Lydia could not help thinking of the last gentleman reader to whom she had listened, she became so engrossed by her thoughts that Mornington had read three whole pages before she was aware of one word that he had uttered. However, she at last forced herself to attend, and found that she had lost nothing ; for as, generally speaking, our best reviewers devote so much more time and space to giving their own opinions and ideas upon the manner, in which the forthcoming subject ought to be treated, rather than to making criticism upon the way in which it is that frequently more than half of the so-called criticism consists of nothing more than their own peculiar ideas ; and as this was somewhat the case in the present instance, Lydia found she was quite in time to hear all she wanted, in spite of her previous inattention.

Poor Mornington found this reading aloud so heavy a task, that every now and then an unsuccessful attempt at an ill-suppressed yawn betrayed the *ennui* he really did feel. Yet on he

went—on—on—quite mechanically, and thought no more of what he was uttering than the giddy little Fanny at his side, who, the happiest of the party, was making an endless daisy-chain, and at last began twining it round Mornington's hat, which lay on the grass by his side. He was seated on the lowest of all low garden-stools—so low that Fanny was seized with the desire to twist it round what she had heard her sister Lydia in her presence imprudently call his "stubble hair."

"Be quiet, Fanny dear!" said Louisa; for Lydia, who was still sketching, and now and then looked off her drawing at Fanny's manoeuvres, was, I must own, too much amused by them to rebuke her.

Fanny ceased for a few minutes: then, taking advantage of the watchful Louisa's eyes being bent over some rather difficult work, as well as of Mr. Mornington's extreme good nature, she proceeded again, having made a wreath which she thought would fit as nicely round his head as did one of roses which Lydia had worn at the last of the few balls she had been at. Mr. Mornington, however, began to be a little fidgeted by her amusement, for he took hold of Fanny gently, as if to draw her away, though he continued reading, when—oh! wonder and horror!—Fanny gave a sudden scream, and the party, looking up, beheld in her hand the crown of his unfortuate *chevelure*, for part of the "stubble hair" was false, and the top of his poor skull was now perfectly bald!

If ever there was a climax to misery, or a crisis in the history of a lover, especially a Lover upon Trial, this was one. It was imposible to resist it. The sisters—even the prudent and kind Louisa—laughed until nearly exhausted; while Fanny, conscious of having got into a most awful scrape—for she actually had perpetrated the audacious deed to ascertain whether or not there was any truth in Lydia's once expressed suspicion that her lover wore a wig—Fanny scampered away as fast as ever she could, crown in hand, and Mornington after her, who had started as soon as the first shock was over, but which gave Fanny the advantage of at least a hundred yards, so that the unlucky man had a good run before catching the culprit and rescuing his stolen locks. At last he reached her, recovered his property, whilst the sisters beheld him from afar *re-covering* his bald pate, and righting the false hair as well as he could, deprived as he was of his accustomed assistant, a looking-glass. What was to be done? Now that the unavoidable, irrepressible merriment had had its vent, Louisa and Lydia felt truly distressed. Lydia went off immediately to lecture Fanny, who had skulked into the house; Flora retired to her own little garden far away, probably to have another good laugh; whilst Louisa—the ever-

thoughtful, kind, consoling Louisa—remained where she was, thinking how she best could succeed in smoothing down this most vexatious business.

“I do trust,” she gently said, as soon as the discomfited Lover upon Trial rejoined her, which he did slowly and somewhat hesitatingly—“I do trust, Mr. Mornington, you will forgive Fanny her almost unpardonable liberty; and remember how of late you have yourself helped to excite her to it by your kindness.”

“Oh! I bear her no malice,” he replied; “she is such a mere child; but that all—that your sister Lydia—should have so laughed at me! Well, perhaps,” added the good-natured man, “it could hardly have been helped. No doubt I should have laughed also had I been the spectator instead of the sufferer. But now, Miss Middlemore,” and he paused, looking sad and embarrassed; “I shall take this opportunity of saying, only a little sooner, what I should shortly have been compelled to express to some of your family; and to you I would rather say it than to any other—you are always so kind—so very kind! I am going away for some time—going to a friend in Scotland, for I give up all hope that your sister will ever care for me. Indeed, how can I expect it? I am not worthy of her; I don’t know who is. Yes! perhaps—but I am not even sure about that. She has borne with me, I know, because Sir William kindly wished her to do so—but that is all. Pray do not think”—and here he hesitated a little—“that I am weak enough to be influenced by this last half-hour’s foolish business. I confess I should have felt awkward enough when I saw them all again; but that would not weigh with me for a moment had I but the faintest hope; but I have none. Say all that is kind and also grateful from me to Sir William and Lady Middlemore, and Sir William especially. I shall ever remember with a gratified feeling, that he would have entrusted to me for life such a daughter as—as Lydia: let me so call her for the first—I fear for the last time. I cannot take leave of him, or tell him what I feel. I shall be absent some months; and when I return—for I have acquired a love for Highwood—I hope you will all receive me again kindly, and look upon me merely as a friend and neighbor; and above all things, do not let your sister fear I shall ever renew those assiduities which I know must have been irksome to her. Give this also to dear little mischievous Fanny,” taking from his waistcoat pocket a gold pencil-case she had long been enamoured of, and which he had often lent her. “Let her keep it as a token that I bear her no malice for the trick she has played me, and tell her that she shall still remain what she has always called herself—my little friend.

Poor man!—something like a tear came into each large round eye, and real ones stood in those of the kind-hearted Louisa. She never could bear to see anybody unhappy, and Mornington was really unhappy.

Thus ended the visits of the Lover upon Trial. It was a tragic-comic *finale* certainly; and Fanny was many days in disgrace, and many weeks passed before she earned by more staid and demure behavior, Mornington's handsome gold pencil-case.

The family at the Grange continued to live on quietly enough. Lydia heard from time to time of the rapid success and brilliant career of the celebrated lawyer, Mr. Falconer, and read the announcement of his marriage in the paper about a year after she had parted from him. He had moved heaven and earth to accomplish the fulfilment of his wishes on that point, telling Mrs. Lennard, whom he met in London not long after his visit to L——, that it was impossible to live without either Selina or Lydia—a speech which betrayed beyond a doubt how much he had been taken with the latter, but which Mrs. Lennard had the prudence not to repeat to her young friend.

Three years after his marriage, Lydia read in the paper the account of Mr. Falconer's elopement with the beautiful Mrs. P. the wife of an eminent brother lawyer and intimate friend of his own. In spite of his usual outward reserve, Falconer was, as Mrs. Lennard had said, a man of ardent passions, against which, with his unfortunate opinions, he was not very well calculated to contend. His career in life was, however, by this shameful transaction, which was also blackened by very aggravated circumstances, altogether checked. No one could trust such a man, of whom even the more thoughtless part of the world declared that "Falconer, though well versed in law, had proved that he knew nothing of equity." He never rose in his profession to the height to which he had once looked forward, and was quite lost in the consideration and esteem of the better sort of people.

"Poor Selina! fortunate Lydia!" said the latter to herself, after this terrible affair had become known to her. "When I was acquainted with him, it appeared to me as if there could have been no greater happiness than that of being his wife. He is the only man I have ever seen whom I could have fondly loved. I remember, too, I was quite inclined to murmur and repine that such a one was not for *me*. I used to think that time, or reasoning, or complaining, might probably alter his erroneous opinions, and make him become all that might be wanting in his character. I used to think how delightful it would have been to have turned him to better thoughts; but how vain, how weak a thought, that one so young, so inexperi-

enced as myself, could have influenced a man of his age and talents! I *saw*, then, it is true, all that was for the best; but now I *feel* it to be so. Still I did so like him! but I am now most thankful he loved another. Why should I have preserved his love more than poor Selina? Still it is difficult to meet with the being who is altogether such as one could be really happy with for life."

And this difficulty remained with her, and she persisted in refusing those she could not love with all her heart, and respect with all her mind.

Louisa married the Arthur Selby alluded to in the conversation between Lydia and her father on the morning when she was first made acquainted with Mornington's proposal. Arthur was an excellent person, and made Louisa perfectly happy; but much as he was beloved as a brother-in-law, Lydia always felt he never would have pleased *her* as a husband. Flora also married, and far sooner than might have been expected of the only personally unattractive one of the four sisters.

Lydia continued single; and, as her mother once told her, with a mind like hers, she was sure to have—she had—her enjoyments; and perhaps what tended in some measure to ensure them was, that what little over-enthusiasm might originally have existed in her character was sobered down by a practical, though not a severe piety. Her little—perhaps, after all, not so very little—disappointment as regarded Falconer, and afterwards the proof he gave of want of principle, was, as it were, to her a sort of moral shower-bath. She felt the shock, but it strengthened all her better feelings eventually, and confirmed the opinion she had always more or less avowed, even in her more enthusiastic and thoughtless days—that talent alone in a man will not ensure a wife's happiness. She learned to look at life as it ought to be looked at—as

"A stage where every man must play his part."

usefully, thoughtfully, and often with much of self-sacrifice. Between her home duties, her married sisters, and the assistance she gave her mother in finishing the education of the wild but clever and good-hearted Fanny, she had little time to pass in thinking of her own single life, or to allow her mind to prey upon itself; and she fortunately did not feel with Orlando, when he says—

"How bitter it is

To look at happiness through another man's eyes!"

She looked at it pleased and thankfully, through the eyes of her married sisters—through those of her father and mother, who

were never happier than when Lydia was with them; and though she still felt the truth of her mother's assertion, that "married life was the most desirable lot for woman," she always continued to say and to feel, that for her to think so, it must have been a married life "*comme il y en a peu*," and never regretted any one of the offers she had rejected.

So Lydia Middlemore, though so attractive and admired, lived to be an "old maid," but was fortunate enough never to be the cause of exciting any of the ridicule she had once so powerfully anticipated from single blessedness; and single blessedness hers really was, for she found she made the happiness, not of *one* individual, but of many; and when the awful hour came that she had to print upon her visiting cards "Mrs. Lydia Middlemore," she could even smile cheerfully as she looked upon them.

THE END.

THE WILL.

CHAPTER I.

It was a sweet summer night. Earth and air were alike still; but it was a stillness which did not amount to silence—for the song of the bird, the sigh of the wind, and the quiver of the leaves as they were stirred into sound by the low breeze, came soothingly to the ear, and kept the mind awake to the sympathies of nature. Existence is in itself a blessing at such an hour, to all who are capable of appreciating its purer enjoyments. Wherever flowers were scattered over the earth the air was full of perfume; and the long lines of moonlight which chequered the landscape lay broad and pale, as though tempered in their brightness by the calm solemnity of the scene.

Nowhere were the flowers sweeter, the landscape fairer, the night-birds more full of music, than around Greville Lodge, at the particular moment of which we are about to write. Without the house all was calm and beautiful. The picture within was somewhat less tranquil, less spirit-stirring. But the fault did not lie in the locality itself; for nothing could be more luxurious or more elegant in its arrangements than the chamber in which our narrative commences.

It was easy to see that wealth and taste had gone hand-in-hand in its adornment, and that neither had been spared. The lofty bed was hung with silken draperies of pale-blue damask; and the high bay window, which was flung widely open to admit the cooling breeze, was similarly sheltered. Sofas and couches of the most fantastic variety of texture and form were dispersed over the yielding carpet; *bijouterie* of every description crowded the dressing-table and mantelpiece of the black marble; and more than one mirror of costly dimensions, panelled into the walls, gave the room rather the appearance of an apartment prepared for the reception of guests than a chamber destined to repose.

Such as it was, however, all its elaborate luxury was, on that summer night, subject of self-reproach rather than of enjoyment to its principal occupant; for upon the bed, whose silken curtains were flung back, and whose tasseled ropes were knotted recklessly together, to compress their voluminous folds into a still smaller

compass, that no breath of wind might be impeded in its passage to the sufferer, lay stretched the dying form of the Honorable Charles Greville, the coxcomb, the epicurean, the sybarite, and the sensualist—Charles Greville, once the Beau Nash of the ball-room, the Brummel of the banquet.

There were neither sighs nor tears to disturb his last moments—and yet about his bed stood three fair women ; pale, anxious, and terror-stricken, it is true, but displaying none of that beautiful devotion, that graceful self-abnegation, that holy energy, which women of all stations and of all countries occasionally exhibit, to an extent which may well put to the blush the colder and more calculating feelings of the other sex ; and which they seldom fail to exert, in a marked degree, even where their sympathies are coldly met, and their exertions grudgingly acknowledged.

Here, however, it was not so. Mrs. Greville and her daughters surrounded the bed of death with one general terror at their hearts, one general question in their minds, “How are we to exist when he is gone?”

Taken in one of its phases, the inquiry would have been pious, dutiful, and full of an overflowing love, which saw earth once more resolved into chaos by the evanishment of the poor spirit that was even now struggling feebly to retain its hold upon the pain-tossed frame it was so soon to quit ; but this was by no means the sense in which it was made by the fair trio in the death-room. Each and all were thinking of the noble income which must expire with the selfish being who had sacrificed their future prospects to his own egotism ; by whom the mother had been first deluded into marriage against the will of her family, who, in consequence, rejected her ; and subsequently abandoned with her infant girls almost to penury, because her presence, and the knowledge that he was a married man, trammelled her husband in certain circles, and embarrassed him in all.

For long and weary years the mother and her children had been aliens from their home ; and it is very doubtful that they would ever again have found themselves domesticated beneath the patrician roof of Mr. Greville, had he not, in one of his periodical penances, to advance the paltry stipend he allowed his wife—a duty, and about the only one, that he entailed upon himself twice a year, because he did not think proper to intrust even his most confidential friends with the retreat of his family, lest the fact of their existence should be thus kept alive, and perhaps obtruded upon him at some unfortunate moment—had he not, we say, upon one of these occasions, despite his long enduring indifference to everything relating to “the women in Hertfordshire,” been irresistibly struck by the extreme beauty of the two sisters, who, at the respective ages of fifteen and

seventeen, might have sat as models—the one for Hebe, the other for Diana.

As the fact forced itself upon him, the Honorable Charles Greville withdrew his eyes from his daughters, and fastened them, with all the cold fastidiousness of a virtuoso, upon his wife. The survey was perfectly satisfactory. Mrs. Greville had never been remarkable for a hyper-degree of refinement, but there was a decided air of fashion about her. The connoisseur under whose particular and scrutinizing notice she had now fallen, took in at a glance that her dress, although made of inferior materials, (he could possibly have accounted readily for the circumstance) was, nevertheless, remarkably well put together; in short, that she was, with her fine eyes, her well-preserved teeth, her small hands and feet, her slight and symmetrical figure, her beautiful hair and her careful toilette, a very showy, creditable, and sufficiently elegant person to place at the head of his table, to acknowledge as the mother of his girls, and to address as Mistress Greville in the hearing of his associates.

So far, all was well. The exterior of the whole party was everything that he could have wished; but the recollection (for the first time painful) of the amount of Mrs. Greville's allowance during her eleven years of exile, forbade all hope that the minds of the young ladies could bear any comparison with their faces. He saw at a glance that their fine hair was dressed with almost French skill and precision; that their pretty feet were also dressed with exemplary care: and that no exertion had been spared by either of the fair sisters to make their peculiar attractions tell; but a shudder of anticipatory disgust came over him as he reflected on the probable consequences of encouraging them to talk! for hitherto he had never heard their voices, save in monosyllabic replies to his arriving and departing courtesies, which, sooth to say, were cold and brief enough.

Mr. Greville, however, in this instance as in many others, did injustice to the innate cleverness of his wife. He had so long accustomed himself to think only of the one person who must be considered at Greville Lodge; the dear self who was the alpha and the omega of his own thoughts, that he entirely overlooked the existence of that other probable instinct and intellect which might, had it only a chance of asserting itself, be even a match for his own, although perchance by a broader and less refined method of demonstration.

How could the unapproachable Charles Greville speculate upon such a contingency! Poor Mrs. Greville had been struggling upon £150 a year, deserted by her family and despised by her husband; who, so far from esteeming her an object of pity, frequently asked himself, in a moment of reflection, whether he was not over-indulg-

ent in permitting to her the use of a name which in a paroxysm of stupid passion he had bestowed upon her ; and with great readiness permitted himself to be convinced of the fact.

It was, however, fortunate, for the peace of all parties, that the honorable egotist did not endeavor to act upon this conviction ; for the lady, whose wits were sharpened by poverty, and whose naturally stirring nature was excited to still greater energy by the necessities of her position, soon became aware of the full value of the fragment of aristocracy which adorned her name ; and often did she boast to her girls, when they grew old enough to understand her, that the prefix "Honorable" had been worth more than a hundred a-year to them.

And she was right. The English are a nation of tuft-hunters. Here and there a nose may be curled, or a lip may be raised in scorn of rank ; but this sublime contempt is only affected by the saints and the radicals ; and no one quite believes it to be genuine, even in them. Deny it who dare, I again boldly assert the fact—the English are a nation of tuft-hunters. The folly is bad enough in London, although it must be confessed that of late years what should have proved a most effectual cure has been copiously provided in the persons of about as many foreign title-holders as there are hours in the year, not to mention the Poles, Prussians, Frenchmen, and Italians ; or the family party of North American Indians, who some time since arrived in town, to display their ring-nosed royalty and scarlet blankets to the admiration of civilized England.

What, however, is mere folly in London, deepens into positive vice in the country. A baronet is a great card in a post town ; and an honorable is a standing trump in a village. A knight's widow, or the relict of a town mayor, dubbed during his mayoralty, is not to be despised ; and no party can be complete without these local patricians. The handle to their names is lodging and provision to them. Let their impertinence only equal their necessities, and they are quite secure ; for no one would venture to be the first among the little people to incur the coolness of "the title."

Mrs. Greville had soon become abundantly aware of this amiable weakness in the few visitable inhabitants of the pretty, shady, picturesque inland village, in which it had been the will and pleasure of her husband to establish herself and her daughters in a small "cottage of gentility," which he had inherited from a godfather ; nay, so cleverly did she turn her advantage to account, that it secured to her the Welsh mutton and sherry dinners of her party-giving neighbors, and the cider, poultry, and eggs of the less distinguished parishioners, who, following the lead of the gentry, were ever ready to sacrifice a trifle, in order to secure the passing recognition of the lady of quality.

To Mrs. Walker, the curate's wife, and Mrs. Parsons, the lawyer's lady, it was a great delight, during their periodical visits to their relatives, to talk of their "sweet friends, the Honorable Mrs. Greville and the two Honorable Miss Grevilles;" for the worthy gentlewomen had never studied the peerage, and they consequently extended the distinction to the whole family without hesitation or misgiving; and had they ventured to resent sundry little insolences and over-reachings on the part of their dignified acquaintance, they must have forfeited this charming privilege; a fact of which they were so well aware, that they did not even venture to admit to their better halves, in the security of a fireside *tête-à-tête*, that the mistress of Rose Cottage made them occasionally pay a high price for the honor of her countenance; nay, they virtuously endeavored to convict themselves of injustice, for they felt that they could not forego the gratification of "pulling down the pride" of distant aunts, cousins, and nieces, who sometimes, upon the strength of a yearly trip to London, and an introduction to some third-rate milliner, endeavored to overwhelm them with "the last new fashions," by assuring the triumphant possessors of the finery that they had been most shamefully treated, for that the Honorable Miss Arabella Greville had worn one precisely similar two years previously, and that the Honorable Miss Blanche had declared that she was positive to having seen the same thing upon Lady Somebody Something, a cousin-german of hers, the season before.

Luxuries like these must be paid for. Poverty had added to Mrs. Greville's natural shrewdness. She was too clever a tactician not to make the discovery, and to profit by it; and thus it was that she condescendingly permitted Arabella to share the singing-lesson of the two Miss Walkers, and Blanche to study the harp, under the auspices of pretty little Mrs. Peters, the apothecary's bride. Then the five Parson girls had a French governess, the wife of an emigrant who died in the village, and who had imbibed the local passion for the Grevilles, because they reminded her of the good old time when she was herself Madame la Comtesse de Ribedout, and frequented the Tuileries, before Buonaparte revolutionized the capital of the world, and made a fine art *Mont-de-Piété* of the Louvre. And assuredly nothing could be much more pleasant than to hear the *ci-devant* countess and the helpless honorable talking together in a tone of condescending regret of the joys and triumphs of high blood and exalted station; the one wiping away the scattered snuff from her lap with a well-darned handkerchief, edged with cotton lace, and the other ostentatiously spreading forth the scanty folds of her turned sarcenet.

But even Madame Ribbed-out, as she was familiarly called in the neighborhood, did not enjoy this honor gratuitously; for it was soon

gently hinted to her, that while she was giving her lesson it would cost her but little more trouble to include the Miss Grevilles, in which case she would be welcome to the tea-table at Rose Cottage, whenever she could be spared from the lawyer's school-room; and this arrangement, while it greatly benefited Arabella and Blanche, afforded a proud theme of gratification to good Mrs. Parsons, who talked largely of her girls being educated with the Honorable Miss Grevilles, and obtained for their mother the reputation of an exceeding condescension, which she contrived to turn to account in a variety of ways.

For all this maternal manœuvring, the husband and father was of course by no means prepared; and thus when upon venturing to touch very delicately on the subject of the Miss Grevilles' educational deficiencies, his lady blandly informed him that Arabella had a superb voice, which required only a little more training to render it almost too brilliant for a private room; that Blanche touched the harp like a tenth muse; and that both sisters spoke French with an accent known only in the Faubourg St. Germain, the Honorable Charles opened his large drowsy eyes, and turned them, in astonished admiration, on his long-neglected help-mate. How had she contrived all this upon the same income which he paid to his cook? He quite longed to ask her; but remembering his own dignity, he forbore.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Greville had gained a triumph over the lethargic mind of her husband, at the moment in which he made the discovery, and she was by no means a woman to lose her vantage-ground. The selfish voluptuary rapidly ran over in thought certain recent twinges of the gout, an increasing obesity of girth, and diminution of calf—in short, the *ci-devant* man of fashion felt a conviction that his reign was almost over—that he must soon abdicate or be dethroned—that he began to require to be nursed, and amused, and cosseted—that, in short, he might as well make a home, by recalling his wife and children to his house to be the breakwaters for his temper and the slaves of his will; and accordingly he hinted something of the sort to Mrs. Greville, who only sighed, and remarked that she had now become so thoroughly reconciled to a village life, and felt that her dear girls were so safe away from the great world and all its temptations, that with an additional hundred a year, which the increasing expense of their daughters now rendered almost imperative, she thought that perhaps, all things considered, they had better remain where they were, at least for a time.

Mrs. Greville was decidedly a very clever woman. Her heart was almost bursting with alarm lest he should take her at her word; for long-endured poverty had only tended to make her attach an overweening importance to money. She remembered her manifold

privations, and shifts, and expedients ; and she had also gorgeous reminiscences of the pomp and profusion of Greville Lodge, with its powdered lacqueys, its well-appointed equipages, and its luxurious table ; but she had tact enough to feel that any appearance of eagerness on her part to close with the proposal of her narrow-hearted husband would tend to make him hesitate ; while, on the contrary, her well-assumed air of reluctance only confirmed him in his new resolution.

It will be easily understood that when once the admirably affected hesitation of the lady had given place to a meek and resigned declaration of her determination to act in all things as the will of her husband might dictate, the consequent arrangements were by no means difficult or intricate ; although every preparation made by Mrs. Greville was accompanied by an expression of her reluctance to change the tenor of her existence, and her apprehension that she should prove unequal to the cares of a large establishment, after her limited experience.

The girls, however, were by no means deceived by the bearing of their mother ; they were accustomed to her peculiarly-involved system of action ; nor did they lack penetration, even slight as their knowledge of their honorable father had hitherto been, to discover at once that thence forward the egotist would be as thoroughly "managed" as they had themselves been. They had wit enough, also, to still the beatings of their own hearts, and to assume, under the schooling of their mother, an appearance of placid indifference very foreign to their real sensations.

All this was wonderfully agreeable to Mr. Greville. He was obeyed, and, he believed, at some cost ; for he, worthy man ! had so long been accustomed to be clothed in the "purple and fine linen" of the world, and to revel amid the "feshpots of Egypt," that it never struck him how great their attraction must necessarily be to those who had hitherto known them only by hearsay ; and that it was little probable that three handsome women, who had for years blushed unseen in a country village, should prefer the roses and clematis of their own small and inconvenient cottage to the marble floors and velvet draperies of Greville Lodge.

CHAPTER II

GREAT was the pomp of the leave-taking when Mrs. Greville and her daughters were at length about to quit their little nook in Hertfordshire. The Honorable Charles had departed, after having assured himself that his orders would meet no further opposition ;

and a round of dinners were given to the mother and daughters, which were the more keenly relished by the former, as she felt that to these, at least, no return could be expected. But of all who wept, or appeared to weep their approaching loss, there was no mourner so sincere and so dejected as the poor French woman; for she felt that the patrician tea-table at Rose Cottage was no more, and that for her there was no longer any world save that of the school-room; no memories, save those of regret and humiliation.

Nothing could be more *a propos* than the violent attack of gout under which Mr. Greville was suffering when the fair trio reached their new home; and nothing could be more characteristic than the manner in which their transit was effected. They left the village in the solitary stage-coach by which it was traversed three times a week; and, as the Walkers, the Parsonses, the Joneses, and the Peterses declared, it was quite delightful to see how snug and comfortable they were, with the whole inside to themselves, and picked up at their very door. At a town upon their line of road they found a postchaise awaiting them, into which they packed themselves and their slender wardrobes with considerable exultation; but within two stages of their destination they were met by the roomy, well-hung, thickly-stuffed family coach, fitted up with as many imperials, cap-boxes, carriage trunks, and sword-canes as would have sufficed to contain all the contents of Rose Cottage, furniture inclusive.

Here they were requested by a tall footman, all powder and precision, to halt for the night, in order that they might make a new and more graceful distribution of their luggage, which they accordingly scattered as widely as possible, through the multitudinous conveniences by which their several apartments were encumbered; and, on the following morning, to their immense delight, they found themselves rattling along behind four post-horses, with a couple of servants in the rumble. Blanche looked exultingly at her mother; and Arabella burst into tears. Poor things! All the three were too much bewildered by this unexpected turn in their fortunes to remark the fine and beautiful gradations by which, without one consideration for their comfort, the relative to whom they were now hastening had saved at once his pocket and his pride. Human nature is a magnificent anomaly!

But to recur to Mr. Greville's gout. When the ladies arrived at the lodge, they found him seated in his morning room, in the "deep obscure" of a purple morocco lounging-chair, with his right leg swathed in flannel, resting upon a regent. Above the fire-place hung a highly-finished, full-length portrait of himself, in a hunting-dress, leaning upon a favorite horse. Beside his chair was suspended a miniature of himself, in an evening costume; this was in a

chased gold frame, covered with plate-glass; there was a marble bust of himself in Roman drapery, standing upon a pedestal of *verd antique* between the windows; and in a large panel above the door was an imitation bas-relief of himself in infancy as "Cupid stealing an apple from a sleeping Nymph."

Despite his gout, Mr. Greville had every appearance of being "at home" in his own house.

His reception of the mother and daughters was coolly courteous; but the eldest lady had not been in the room half an hour before the egotist began to wonder how he had ever done without her. She understood him exactly. She dismissed the worn-out valet who was renewing the cold fomentation, and applied the saturated cloths herself with so light a touch, that the attention of the invalid was irresistibly attracted to the fair and dimpled little hand which passed over his shrinking limb like a breath of air; and he internally chuckled as he remarked that the solitary ring which adorned it was her marriage ring—the badge of her social servitude! Come what might, he had secured an admirable nurse, who could not "give him warning," as half a score of others had done; and thus the bargain would not ultimately be a bad one.

Now, our friend Charles Greville had a little weakness, which is however, as we are taught to believe, by no means peculiar to himself, but shared by many other gouty gentlemen; he was inordinately attached to what are called "the good things of this life;" and when he should have applied "patience and water-gruel," he obstinately insisted on substituting turtle and champagne. His "fool of an apothecary," and his "bore of a nurse," had expostulated in vain. Who could possibly know what was good for him better than that idol of his existence—himself? He despised patience; and as to water-gruel—faugh! it was the diet of the parish unions. Mock turtle was at least the substitute—a poor one, it was true, but still the substitute for something recongnized—champagne was a light, laughing, loveable beverage; a liquid fit for gentlemen—it could do no harm to those with whose blood it might blend without discrepancy; therefore it was the most meet and fitting libation for the Honorable Charles Greville, with confirmed and obstinate gout in his left foot, and certain flying twinges on a voyage of discovery previous to location.

Mrs. Greville did not venture on contradiction. Her amiable husband on the very day of her arrival dined upon stewed eels, curried game, and lemon cheesecakes—not one of which the excellent and affectionate lady had ever heard denounced as unwholesome. The gentleman was delighted; he had "for once," he said, "been suffered to take his food in peace;" and although he confined his comments to that circumstance, he was possessed of sufficient taste

to feel that his table not only looked better, but was more comfortable with three fine women seated about it, than when his solitary cover was laid at one of its extremities, and his only companions were the supercilious und silent personages who wore his livery.

It was also pleasant to reflect, that, like everything else by which he was surrounded, the said ladies were his own, whom he was at liberty to snub and twit as he pleased, and who were dependent upon his sovereign will for all that they possessed.

The girls played their parts admirably. They did not venture to call him "papa;" such a reminder, constantly dropping into his ears, would have recalled to the memory of the failing voluptuary that another generation had grown up to push him from his stool; whereas, the smiling but punctilious "Sir" of his beautiful daughters, and the shrinking diffidence with which they permitted rather than encouraged his occasional caresses, flattered his vanity, and threw his thoughts back upon a thousand agreeable passages in his past life.

Let it not however be lightly inferred that any of his reminiscences brought with them visions of self-sacrifice, even for the fair beings whom it had occasionally been his good pleasure temporarily to idolize. We have it on record that the Duke de Richelieu ordered his servants to burn one of his carriages, because Mademoiselle de St. Amaranthe, of whom he was at the moment enamored, refused to allow him to see her home from a party where they met; that the Prince de Conti caused a diamond which he had offered to the Comtess de Blot, and which she declined to accept, to be ground to powder, and then made use of it to dry the ink of the note which he wrote to reproach her with her cruelty; and that the Fermier-Général Bouret fed a cow upon green pease at one hundred and fifty francs the measure, in order that an operadancer, to whom he was devoted, and whom the faculty had placed upon milk-diet, should have her lactean draught in perfection.

Our home experience, although not quite so exaggerated, would nevertheless afford us some reasonable illustrations in the same style; but after the three foregoing they are unnecessary. We are merely anxious that our readers should not do the Honorable Charles Greville the injustice to believe that he had ever been guilty of such enormities. On the contrary he had carefully eschewed all follies of the sort; he considered them as beneath his dignity; and in the present instance, with regard to his daughters, the sentiment as usual began and ended in self. He wondered how he had hitherto contrived to exist without them; and therefore it was that ere a month had elapsed, masters were secured at an immense expense, to perfect them in their several accomplishments; and that the toilettes of all the party revealed their Parisian origin.

The outlay was most judicious. Mrs. Greville, in her point-lace cap and dress of rich satin, and the Miss Grevilles, in all the elegant prettinesses of the existing fashion, were sufficiently distinguished-looking to satisfy even the fastidious selfishness of their exacting owner; and when the magnificent voice of Arabella, and the exquisite harping of Blanche, made eloquent music where all had before been silence, Mr. Greville began to reconcile himself to the fact of being not only that object of his former terror—a married man—but even the father of two grown-up daughters.

Skilfully, while he was in this suave mood of mind, did the clever lady whom he had just reinstated in her rights lead him occasionally to glance into the future. She knew full well that the sensual egotist to whom she had linked her destinies had, when for the second time he was disappointed in his expectation of an heir, made such a disposition of the family property as to secure luxury to himself during his life, and to leave the unfortunate girls, who were unable to perpetuate his name, to elbow their way through the rough world as they might; but she was also aware that there was a great accumulation of ready money at his banker's, which he had been literally unable to convert into additional personal enjoyment; a fact which she had ascertained when, during one of his sharp paroxysms of gout, she had acted as his amanuensis.

This was the golden egg over which Mrs. Greville brooded day and night. She had not the slightest dependence upon either the justice or the stability of her husband; nay, for aught she knew, he might, as she told the girls, turn pious in his last moments, and bequeath this coveted hoard to schools and hospitals—and then, where were they? The matter was important. Mr. Greville was by no means a man with whom it was safe to trifle. The greatest delicacy and circumspection were requisite, for in mooted the subject, she was hinting at the possibility of his death, and, invalid though he was, he had the greatest possible objection to die at all. The point must nevertheless be carried. She had served a bitter apprenticeship to poverty, and had no idea of “setting up” on her own account, if either wit or determination could afford her a better establishment.

But, turn, coil, and twine as she might, not a word could poor Mrs. Greville extort from her husband on this all-important subject. When, newspaper in hand, as she was daily reading aloud to the languid voluptuary, who was too indolent to encounter its mighty columns for himself, she found some case of luxury transformed to want, from which she thought that anything like a parallel might be drawn, in vain did she eloquently sigh over the hard fate of the victims, and paint in glowing colors, broadened and deepened from past experience, the misery of such a fate; the refined habits marred,

the fine feelings quenched, the noble aspirations annihilated. At the termination of each tirade, even although it occasionally cost the lady tears as well as words, the Honorable Charles was either asleep, or feigned to be so; which, in so far as regarded the purpose of his wife, came precisely to the same thing. In vain, when noble bridegrooms were united to rich heiresses, did she pathetically remark upon the all-sufficient power of wealth, and the utter impossibility without it, of well-born young women, be their personal endowments what they might, "getting off" in an advantageous manner, and doing credit to themselves or their families by forming high and honorable connections. When she paused for breath, Mr. Greville either yawned or took snuff; or, if in unusual good humor, nodded his head in acquiescent indifference. The lady was very clever; but she was, on great points, no match for the egotist after all.

And so time went on; and Mr. Greville fasted upon Severn salmon, and Ascension turtle, and Strasbourg *pâté*; and the gout went on also. Now a pang, and now a pause; now a twinge, and now a truce; until it gradually made good its quarters and commenced its final attack. From the toes it traveled to the ankles, from the ankles to the knees—then came shooting pangs, commencing, the patient knew not precisely where, but ending everywhere; and still the toast-water was rendered "decently palatable" with pale sherry, and the gruel "flavored" with cognac, and the barley-water "relieved" by madeira; the worst feature of the case being, that the Honorable Mr. Greville was not, in the mean time, relieved by anything; and ultimately even he, obtuse as he was, both by nature and principle, on this particular point—even he, when he felt beyond all stretch of further self-deception that the enemy was actually invading the region of the stomach, began to think it just possible that he might not recover.

And thus we have traveled back to the luxurious sick room, of which we have already sketched the interior,

CHAPTER III.

TRULY, wealth is a fine thing so long as, with his "purple and fine linen," the Dives of the world commands also sound health and wholesome appetite. Then indeed he may, in his selfish soul, laugh the sons of misery to scorn, and sicken at the rags and black bread of poverty and toil. He possesses all their riches, but they have none of his! There is no parallel between them; no, not one.

Peace, peace, repining starveling! who would find added bitterness in thine own scanty lot from this conviction. Thou art revenged in the sick room, in the death hour, at the grave's mouth; ay, amply, fully, wondrously convicted of thine error. Sickness to the laborer brings at least respite from toil; to him even the vapid diet of the hospital is a variety; death robs him of no worldly vanities; it wrenches asunder, it is true, alike with him and with his tyrant, the holiest bonds of affection, the closest links of humanity; the freeman and the slave, for one hour, bear the same agony; but, unlike those of the voluptuary and the sensualist, the poor man's woes end with these natural pangs.

He leaves not behind him the objects of the voluptuary's idolatry that they may pass to other hands—the stately mirrors into which he has so often gazed admiringly upon his own reflection—the hangings of silk and velvet, which have at one time sheltered him from the sunlight of summer, and at another, screened him from the draughts of winter—the coins of gold and silver, whose very sound and touch were luxury—the jewels and the raiment, which told his tale of prosperity and power to all by whom he was approached—the “harps, and lutes and dulcimers,” which had made music for his idleness, though they often failed to soothe the evil spirit, for the troubled Saul found no David among his minstrels—the tables at which he had feasted—the goblets from which he had drunk—the “chariots and the horsemen” by which he had been surrounded.

The poor man, at the “supreme moment,” is spared the struggle of expiring vanity and selfishness. He leaves no worldly wealth behind to be caviled for by eager relatives, talked of by the idle and the interested, and distributed by the law. When he has rendered up “his great account,” the books of the world are closed upon him, and his name is forgotten, save where it is registered in loving hearts and lingering memories—and in the grave.

Would the poor man repine, even although he might know too well beforehand that he will be laid there at the close of a pauper funeral? Nay, nay; he hath no need to do so. Let him leave to the great their grim, damp vaults, where shelved and lettered coffins are ranged in ghastly rows; and relatives who have borne deadly feud, or silent hate, the one towards the other throughout their lives are piled up side by side in a wanton mockery of kindred and affection, to curdle and decay together, and to make one common feast for the same foul reptiles! Let him leave to the rich their tall and iron-guarded tombs, even although thereon, deep graven into the stone, be set forth the pompous enumeration of their many gifts and virtues, for the first time freely and ungrudgingly admitted by the survivors.

Let not the poor envy these. Upon their less assuming graves

the summer sun shines down blithely ; the summer breeze wanders lovingly ; the wild blossom and the wild bee are to be found nestled amid the fresh grass that covers it like a garment ; the gentle rains of spring, and the silvery snows of winter, come to them pure from heaven ; and there is nothing of man, or of man's vanity, left to separate the creature from its Creator. Let them remember, and find a hallowed and a holy comfort in the conviction, that—

The stately tomb which shrouds the great leaves to the grassy sod,
The dearer blessing, that its dead are nearer to their God !

Mr. Greville was indeed a Dives. He had much from which to part reluctantly in this world ; and thus, as he writhed in agony upon his bed, his eyes wandered rapidly, and for the first time greedily over the luxurious appliances of his apartment. He had never before felt their value, for he had never before been conscious how very soon they would cease to minister to his egotism. Everything had been done to lessen the shock, as well as the suffering of sickness, to the querulous and exacting invalid. His medicines had been administered in goblets of delicately-tinted Bohemian glass, and his "slops" in cups of Sèvres or Dresden china ; perfumes and essences were scattered in every direction, in every variety of *flacon* and *sachet* invented by modern folly ; books, pamphlets, caricatures, and journals crowded the sofas ; forced fruits and exotic flowers covered the tables ; while washes, dyes, soaps, and powders, and all the thousand puerilities for which we have not time to find a name, but which are essential to the "making up" of a would-be young man, cumbered the ample toilette, as if in mockery of the human pangs which were impressing wrinkle upon wrinkle, and making of life itself an agony.

"Why do you stand staring about me, as though you expected that I should die with every breath I draw?" vehemently and suddenly exclaimed Mr. Greville, as, after having completed their survey of the apartment, his eyes wandered over the pale faces of his wife and daughters. "Can you do nothing for me but look as if I had become an object of terror to you all? Has not your boasted affection the power to save me from one of these accursed pangs?"

And even as the words were uttered, he set his teeth hard, and clenched the eider-down quilt in his convulsed fingers, while a cold damp started upon his brow as he cast himself back upon his pillows in a fresh paroxysm of pain.

"My dear Mr. Greville," said his wife, in the accent of gentle and timid expostulation which she never attempted save when she had some important point to carry ; "do not reproach us for our deep and anxious sympathy. Are you not everything to us? And yet, now I think of it," continued the lady, as if struck by a sud-

den conviction, "the sight of so many sad faces congregated about you may well affect your spirits. Leave us, my dear girls, until Mr. Greville shall himself summon you. He is too thoroughly assured of your devoted affection for your absence from his side to imply neglect."

The young ladies awaited no second bidding, but inclining their heads silently and gracefully to their dying parent, glided out of the room. Mr. Greville looked after them as they disappeared, and for the first time in his life a sigh, which was not for his own sorrows, rose to his lips. "What is to become of them?" he murmured to himself, while the eager ear of his wife caught up his low and tremulous words. "They are handsome, very handsome; and if I have, perhaps——"

Again the sharp agony passed over his frame, and warned him that he had to do only with the present. Mrs. Greville wiped the clammy moisture from his brow with a handkerchief like a cob-web, and a touch as light as a gossamer; and once more the wretched man subsided into comparative ease.

"It is too late now—too late—too late! It is useless to torment myself upon the subject," were his next articulate mutterings; "they must do the best they can. Marry—ay, some men have a fancy for wives—they had better marry."

"Alas!" whispered the lady, in a tone of sentiment admirably suited to the occasion, as she affected to suppose that the remarks of the invalid were addressed to herself, "that, my dear sir, is quite impossible, unless you are good enough to make a suitable provision for them, in which case there could be no doubt of their success; for, with a tolerable fortune, great beauty, and the name of Greville, they would be very desirable matches. But if you leave them penniless, there is no hope. They must then content themselves with a life of toil, mortification, and hardship." And again the embroidered handkerchief was applied to the fine eyes of the speaker.

"Curse the gout!" shouted Mr. Greville furiously, as a convulsion of keener pain than he had yet experienced shook his whole frame, and distorted his still handsome features. "Were my limbs given me only to be made the sport of devils? Don't whine to me, madam!" he pursued, still more violently, as soon as he had recovered the power of speech. "Let them work—can their labor entail on them such agony as mine? Can the poverty to which they have been all their lives accustomed, bring such mortification as mine, in thus seeing myself chained down to this infernal bed, surrounded by a parcel of puling women? Can any hardship be equal to living upon slops, and swallowing the filth vomited by the foul shops of chemists, and the surgeries of dirt-compounding

apothecaries? What is the use of talking in such a strain to me? Are you not aware that I sunk all my property in a life-annuity? Do you suppose me to be such an idiot as to have left anything to chance in these days of failures and bankruptcies? You might as sensibly have suspected me of living upon boiled mutton and Cape Madeira!"

"Spare me your reproaches, however, Mrs. Greville," he pursued, as he perceived that a sudden fire flashed from the eyes of the lady, and that she was about to speak in perhaps a somewhat less subdued strain than was her wont. "I was assuredly a fool to marry, as I did, for a pretty face, when I was warned against it by every friend I had in the world; all of whom knew that marriage was the ruin of a man of my caste. I see it well enough now, and have done so for years; but where there is no remedy, it avails nothing to shatter one's nerves with regrets and repinings. I did it, and the thing can't be undone. I have little fault to find with you since I summoned you home—I feel that I should miss you if you were not here, and so I have considered it right——"

The lady leant eagerly forward. Her breath came quick and short, and her heart beat rapidly. Mr. Greville had paused to give way to one of those long, convulsive yawns, which are so universally the accompaniments of sharp and fitful bodily pain; and at its close his own selfish annoyances were once more uppermost.

"It is very extraordinary, Mrs. Greville," he remarked bitterly, "that you can remain so quietly and comfortably seated, when you must see that the moonlight is streaming in through that window at your back upon the foot-curtains of my bed, and producing an effect that, besides wearing my own eyes, must make me look in those of others like one of the demons in *Der Freischütz*!"

Poor Mrs. Greville! She rose, and excluded the offending moonlight by drawing over a portion of the open casement a fold of the silken curtains. She had never been guilty of a poetic tendency, although during the period of her village residence she had entertained a certain respect for the moon, as it had occasionally enabled her to defer for an hour or two, upon that lady-like pretext, the expense of candles; but at that moment she would gladly have consigned all its beams to the bottom of a coal-pit. It was the first time that Mr. Greville had ever been betrayed into a hint concerning the future—he lived only in the present—and she was shrewd enough to feel that it would require most able management to bring him back to the subject which he had so abruptly abandoned.

The genius of Mrs. Greville was however equal to all exigencies, and she was by no means destitute, as has been already shown, of the same impulse of self-consideration which had throughout

life distinguished her amiable lord ; although in her case it had assumed a modified and less repulsive character. It was also certain that she could not, as the Honorable Charles had done, rid herself of all domestic anxieties by pensioning off her daughters with an allowance of £150 a year. Nay—the miserable woman knew not whether, when the pain-wrung and rapidly-sinking invalid before her should have ceased to suffer, she might not be left destitute with her two orphan girls ; and it was therefore not surprising that her naturally quick wit was sharpened to its extremest power at such a crisis.

CHAPTER IV.

HITHERTO, since their re-union, not the slightest demonstration of attachment had been volunteered by either party. When his wife was about to head his table in an unusually becoming dress, and was looking more than commonly fashionable and distinguished, Mr. Greville had once or twice condescendingly testified his sense of the fact by touching her brow or her hand with his lips, as Sir Charles Grandison may be supposed to have saluted those of Miss Harriet Byron at the termination of their first seven years' courtship ; and Mrs. Greville, who had too much at stake to run the risk of offending by any unwelcome advance or innovation, had sometimes bestowed the same favor upon her husband on the receipt of a trebly figured bank-note, or the payment of a heavy bill for millinery ; but beyond such courtesy she had never ventured.

She remembered the fact at this very critical moment ; and with it came the conviction that she had now exhausted upon the self-centred being before her every other care, and deference, and attention which it was in her power to exert. Since her return to Greville Lodge, she had been to him at once a companion, a secretary, and a nurse ; she had never rebelled against his caprices, never disputed his tastes, never controlled his appetites ; and what had she gained beyond present luxury ? Positively nothing. She at once felt that she had but one winning-card left in her hand, and that the time had indeed come to risk it.

So convinced, she did not hesitate for a moment to act upon the conviction ; and although it has taken a long time and many words to tell, Mrs. Greville had thought and felt, and resolved all this during the few seconds in which she was engaged in shutting out the moonlight ; and accordingly, when her office was completed, instead of returning to her seat, she moved noiselessly to the pillow of the invalid, and pressed her lips against his cheek.

The intense surprise painted in the eyes of Mr. Greville it would be difficult to describe; but there was no shade of displeasure mingled with the astonishment. It was a novelty for persons to act for themselves in anything in which he was concerned; and to the *blasé* man of the world any novelty was welcome. They were alone, too; for the attendants were snugly established in an ante-chamber, profiting by the relief afforded by the ministrations of their mistress in the sick-room; and thus there was no one by to remark his weakness in permitting the tenderness of his own wife. The lady saw her advantage at once and felt that the ice was broken.

"My beloved Charles!" she murmured, as she laid her small, cool hand upon his burning brow, "why cannot I, by supporting a portion of this torture, relieve you of at least a few of those sharp pangs? But you are surely better just now, love! You are more composed—more tranquil. Is it not so?"

Mr. Greville was still half-bewildered, and did not immediately reply.

"Endeavor to rally, Charles," pursued the lady, as she sunk down gently on her knees beside the bed without removing her hand; "think how much depends upon your life—your health—the happiness of myself and our dear girls! And they are lovely girls—are they not, Greville?—girls to be proud of, to be ambitious for, doing credit to their name and to their blood. Both, both beautiful! but Arabella incomparably the most lovely."

"Sir John Shepperton, when he dined here last month, thought Arabella very like me," said the invalid, fairly off his guard.

"Sir John has the eye of a painter as well as a critic," replied Mrs. Greville, in the same low, quiet murmur; "he could not fail to be struck with the resemblance. And our fair Blanche is perfect, too, in her peculiar style."

"Flaxen hair, blue eyes, and brown eyebrows," whispered out Mr. Greville; "a far more common class of beauty; but still beauty, I admit. Enough of them, for the moment, however. I feel easier just now, and I would talk of yourself. Not that I have any idea that this attack will prove fatal. Dr. Phillimore looked as though he wished me to ask him his opinion, but I am not one to be hoodwinked by the professional prejudices and jargon of a physician. I have no idea of paying a man for attempting to frighten me out of the world" (Mr. Greville had once more forgotten his wife in himself); "and as to their absurdity about this, that, and the other thing driving the gout into my stomach; things, too, to which I have been accustomed all my life—it's sheer humbug, and, I verily believe, done purely to torment me."

Mrs. Greville bent down her head upon the thin, white hand

which rested on the coverlet, and this movement brought back the thoughts of the patient to herself. "You have been more rational, Ellen, than any one about me. I owe you that confession, and you shall find that I have not been ungrateful. Shepperton volunteered to take all the trouble off my hands, and so I authorized him to purchase an annuity with the money that was lying at my banker's. I can do nothing for the girls; I have no means; but you will have £1,400 a year for life."

Mrs. Greville felt as though she should choke, but tears fortunately came to her relief, and they fell upon the hand of the invalid.

"Spare me a scene, Mrs. Greville," he said coldly; "I am too weak to contend with violent emotions; and, moreover, I never had a taste for them; they are unnecessary and unladylike."

"How shall I thank you?" commenced his companion.

"By giving me a tumbler of that claret—the last brought up; and by doing so without comment or hesitation. Had you been less prompt in complying with my wishes during your domestication here, I should never have racked my head at such a time about your annuity."

The lady obeyed in silence; and the voluptuary swallowed another accessory to the fatal disease which had now progressed sufficiently towards a vital part to leave him without pain. The wine gave him a temporary energy, under whose influence he said suddenly, "Open that bureau, Ellen; the key is on my dressing-table. My cursed will is there—just in there, ready to be signed; and I will do it now (though I feel it to be a piece of unnecessary humbug, for I am better than I have been for the last month), and the thing will be off my mind. Call in four of the servants to witness it, and then Inkpen will, I suppose, leave me in peace."

As Mrs. Greville held the precious document in her hand, and prepared, as usual, to obey without remonstrance the orders of her husband, happy as she felt in the consciousness of her own future security, the conviction that her children were utterly without provision rendered her desperate. She had long ceased to be scrupulous when she had a point to carry; and a thousand wild and impossible fancies swept across her busy brain.

Suddenly she started; her resolve was taken. She placed the will once more within the bureau; and gliding to the window, closed it without noise, and drew the curtain over it as if to prevent interruption from without. Then approaching the bed once more, she was about to address her husband, when he exclaimed impatiently, "What is the meaning of this mummer? Are you going to make a scene for a melodrama out of the signing of a sheet of parchment, which I shall probably destroy the next time I sort my papers, and which I only trouble myself about to-night because I

have been worried upon the subject until I am anxious to get rid of it altogether."

"Bear with me one moment, my dear Charles," said the lady, preserving all her self-possession for the great work which she had in hand, and not suffering the impetuous ill-temper of the invalid to ruffle her for an instant; "I will not try your patience long. You say that I have been useful to you; that I have been submissive and obedient, and have saved you from the perpetual and annoying contradictions of others. I am glad, most glad, that I have been thus enabled to perform my duty; for I am as well aware as you can desire me to be that I have done no more. And now will you forgive me, my dear Charles, if I remind you that I have never yet ventured to make a request of you? You may tell me, and you will be right, that you have, since my return home, left me little or nothing to desire. I am fully conscious of that fact also; but still I do not think that you will refuse the first petition that I have ever made to you, and which I am now about to risk."

"If it be anything reasonable," said Mr. Greville impatiently, "it is quite possible that I may not refuse; but pray let us get it over at once, for I am beginning to be weary of all this circumlocution."

"I would ask you, then, my dear love," murmured his wife, as she again bent her knee beside his pillow; "I would ask you not to leave your daughters penniless."

"Mistress Greville," said the invalid, in an accent of suppressed rage, gnashing his teeth as he spoke, "is it your pleasure to mock me on my sick bed? I have already told you, madam, that I have made suitable provision for my widow, and that I can do no more."

"But indeed, indeed, you *can* do more, much more; all you please, dear love, if you will only be guided this once by me. I do not ask you for money, Mr. Greville. You have already provided nobly for my comfort, nor can the girls want while I live; but should I die——"

"It is not so easy to send people out of the world as doctors and nurses would fain have us believe," growled the only half-appeased patient, curious, in spite of himself, to learn the meaning of a mystery that he could not fathom. "Phillimore wanted to kill me off ten days ago; and here I am, more likely to live than I was five years back, although I have refused to listen to his cursed croaking, or to follow his unpalatable advice. I am better to-night; I am sure I am—and therefore, if all this rhodomontade is in any way connected with my will, Mrs. Greville, tell me what you have to say at once, for I repeat that it will soon be no better than waste paper, as, since I have felt so wonderfully better, I have remembered that it contains half-a-dozen things which I shall alter."

"Then, if so, my love," said the lady, coaxingly, "I am sure you will not hesitate to indulge me in my caprice, and I shall explain it without farther hesitation. I do not think that I need waste more words upon the subject. I want you simply to make a codicil to that will, and to leave our dear girls, £30,000 each."

"You are assuredly deranged, Mrs. Greville!" said the invalid, as he attempted to raise himself upon his elbow to look at her more closely, but fell back again from excessive weakness; "you are most assuredly deranged! Have I not told you till I am weary of repeating the same words, that I have nothing save my personals to bequeath? and yet you persist in asking me to give your girls the fortunes of a duke's daughters?"

"Not to give them fortunes, my dear Mr. Greville, only to append a codicil to your will. Do you think it seemly or fitting that your daughters should appear to be left portionless?"

"But the money, madam; where is the money to come from with which you wish the young ladies to be endowed?"

"Nay, nay, dear Charles, all this war of words is sheer folly; let me have my way in this whim; and surely you will do it without further reluctance, when you have declared the very will itself will not, in all probability, be long in existence."

We will not intrude further on this matrimonial *tête-à-tête*. Let it suffice that Mr. Greville's will was duly signed and witnessed before ten o'clock that evening; and that, mortification having succeeded to the violent pangs by which he had been previously assailed, the testator, after declaring once every five minutes that he felt better and easier than he had done for months, was a corpse within eight-and-forty hours afterwards.

Sir John Shepperton, as the most intimate friend and associate of the deceased, was summoned from town, at the request of the widow; and it was with great but silent astonishment that he found himself enabled to congratulate the Honorable Mrs. Greville on the fact, that her departed husband had compensated nobly for his early neglect of his family, by securing to herself a suitable provision for life, and by bequeathing to his daughters each the ample portion of £30,000.

CHAPTER V.

IT WAS with considerable more pleasure than that afforded by the contemplation of the *fortunes* of her daughters, that Mrs. Greville found herself, by the will of her departed husband, the sole proprietress of all his "personals."

This at least was real and tangible; and as she moved, in all the

solemn mockery of woe, through the gorgeous apartments of Greville Lodge, she found great consolation for the fact that she was compelled to vacate the premises within three months of Mr. Greville's death, in the consciousness that, although house and grounds had ceased to be her own, the "furniture and effects" could not fail to realize a considerable sum when consigned to the ivory hammer of the auctioneer; even without taking into consideration the miscellaneous articles of taste and *vertu* which she might deem it expedient to reserve as certificates of the past, and resources for the future.

There was the miniature of the deceased in its chased gold frame—the likeness was undeniable, a little flattered perhaps—but the setting was beautiful. The widow could not necessarily part from so very precious a relic of all that she had lost. The family plate was what Mrs. Greville denominated in her own pet phraseology, "a capital nest-egg;" the family coach was essential—the horses were sold off at once; and, after satisfying herself that her weekly outlay was unnecessarily great at the "Lodge," and that by leaving immediately she might, to quote herself once more, "kill two birds with one stone," she decided, at the close of her first month of widowhood, upon writing to the proprietor of the estate, and resigning its possession, upon the plea of her reluctance to prevent his occupancy of the premises, should such be his intention; and her desire that he should have the opportunity (still only supposing that he might be glad to do so) of securing such of the "fittings-up" of the house and offices as he might wish to retain. Nothing could possibly have been more civil, proper, and expedient on both sides. Mr. Adams, on the receipt of the lady's letter, hastened to pay his respects, and to tender his thanks in person; for, being a moneyed man, and about to bring a bride to the "Lodge," he was naturally anxious that it should be spared the profanation of a public sale. Mrs. Greville understood his position at once; and so did the clever agent who was called in on her side to arrange the valuation of the property; a fact which by no means injured the interests of the lady; who, after removing the thousand and one articles of *vertu* and the knickknackery which she decided on retaining, found herself in possession of the gross sum of £3000, realized by the remaining "personals" and the well-stocked cellar of wine.

Her next care was to discharge all the servants save her own maid, the French *suivante* of her daughters, and the under-butler. Mr. Greville had not burthened his last will and testament with any legacies; even his favorite valet was discharged with a month's wages in perspective; and then Mrs. Greville had, as she remarked to her daughters, "washed her hands of the whole concern."

Three days subsequently, the family coach was again upon the

road, furnished with all its traveling appliance of trunks, boots, and imperials, infinitely better and more closely packed than when it had conveyed the fair trio upon their first journey; and great was the internal exultation of the party when their four smoking posters were suddenly checked before the Imperial Hotel at Cheltham; and "the Honorable Mrs. Greville," her daughters, Mademoiselle Justine, Mrs. Buskbody, and the staid-looking Mr. Jenkins, alighted amid the obsequious greetings and officious services of half a dozen waiters, headed by the bowing host and his smiling wife.

Nothing could be better. The lozenge upon the carriage panels, the deep mourning of the whole party, the trim-looking, pretty little soubrette, and the perfectly respectable middle-aged air of the English servants, sufficed at once to convince all present of the excellent position of the widow and her beautiful daughters; and ere they had thoroughly settled themselves in the handsome suite of apartments selected by the admirable tact of the elder lady, Mrs. Greville had already begun to congratulate herself upon the wisdom of her arrangements.

They had evidently created "a sensation;" that was a great object—for first impressions are always important. She had selected Cheltenham in preference to any other husband-promising place; because, although still teeming with very eligible invalids, and valetudinary nabobs, she was aware that, as far as regards fashion, Cheltenham had been shelved for some time, and was consequently not a whit too gay or dissipated for her recent state of widowhood; and that the girls would have a fair chance of getting off, without any risk of reflection, either upon her prudence, or the glaring unfitness of a frequented watering-place.

To the young ladies themselves, all places were necessarily equally agreeable, if we except only the village in Hertfordshire which had been so long their home, and of which they retained certain memories by no means consonant to their present tastes and pretensions. It is true that the widow once more impressed the necessity of prudence and economy—words which, during her sojourn at Greville Lodge, she had suffered to fall into utter disuse; but the fair listeners were well aware that even these obnoxious terms no longer bore the same meaning in which they had been originally presented to their attention; and they consequently only smiled and nodded, and smoothed down their glossy hair, and arranged their mourning collars, and looked pretty and placid.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Greville was serious. She had, as she rejoiced to reflect, plenty of ready money for the moment; but hotels, and marriageable daughters, and second tables, are all expensive things; and if neither of the girls should marry during the "golden age," she remembered that they must all ultimately fall back upon the

fourteen hundred a year—her own fourteen hundred a year ; or—and this reflection was worse than the first—if she herself should see fit to run the risk of matrimony a second time—and who could believe that the opportunity would be wanting, to a fine-looking, well-dowered widow of forty-five?—the explanations which must inevitably ensue could scarcely fail to ruin her prospects.

Principle is a plain word, but its decided meaning is by no means so tangible. Mrs. Greville piqued herself, as she said, upon “always acting on principle ;” and such being the case, she commenced her operations for the forthcoming campaign, by desiring her daughters, on any and every occasion, to declare that they were—as they knew only too well was indeed the case—wholly dependent upon their mother.

“Do not shrink from this confession, my dears,” she said, in conclusion, after impressing upon them the expediency of the line of conduct which she recommended ; “rather, on the contrary, make a parade of it on every occasion ; for by so doing you not only preserve your own veracity and dignity intact, but you disarm the anger of those who, self-deceived, may feel it their interest to affect to yield credence to your words, when, in point of fact, they only imagine that you make the assertion from a romantic fancy of being loved for your own sake, and not married for your money. That there are individuals weak enough to act in this way, I well know ; but in such cases, the fault will not be ours if they find themselves disappointed. At all events, our path is plain ; I have explained to you what is clearly your duty, and what I beg also to assure you is most undeniably your interest. It now remains for you to obey me, and to do your best to provide for yourselves, while I still possess the power to keep up an appearance calculated to assist your views.

“For the present,” continued Mrs. Greville, “I cannot of course go into any society, nor indeed venture into public at all, save in the pump-room, where my weak health will explain my presence ; but, as it is by no means a part of my plan to shut you up in an hotel drawing-room, where you can neither see nor be seen, you must take a quiet walk every day under the escort of Jenkins and Buskbody ; and I trust that I need not remind you of your deep mourning. More than this it will be impossible for us to do at present ; so we must live on the hope that, in some way or other, we may make one or two eligible acquaintances, under whose chaperonage I may safely permit you, before many weeks are over, to enter into the gaieties of the place, until I am myself able to become your companion.”

The acute reader will now perfectly comprehend the whole scope and nature of Mrs. Greville’s tactics. The effect which was pro-

duced by the foregoing harangue upon the minds and feelings of her daughters it would be worse than idle to explain. They knew that they were handsome; their worldly mother had made them early acquainted with the fact, and had impressed upon them all its importance. They had been flattered and pleased at the idea of passing for rich heiresses—for they had not been deceived for a moment into the belief that they were really such—but they at once felt that their mother was right, and promised obedience the more readily that they were well-inclined to trust to the power of that beauty which they had heard so much and so constantly extolled.

As Mrs. Greville sunk back luxuriously in her well-cushioned *bergère*, and spread abroad the folds of her crape-covered bombasin, she indulged unreservedly in a self-approving reverie.

She had acted upon principle! No one could accuse her of attempting unworthily to deceive. The fortunate suitor who, having won the fair hand of either of her girls, received on his application for the £30,000 bequeathed by the will of Mr. Greville, a reply of “no effects,” could not blame *her*! Would he not have been told, over and over again, both by herself and by her children, that they had no fortune? And could *she* be answerable for this unbelief?

The good lady moreover smiled triumphantly to herself, as she remembered that her servants were not undeceived—it was no part of her policy that they should be so; and really, if people *would* question waiting-maids and serving-men, they deserved to receive false information. And thus the affair was mentally arranged between Mrs. Greville and her conscience; and having eased her mind of the burthen which had oppressed it, the worthy lady yielded to an inclination, which was frequently her “custom i’ the afternoon,” and soon slept the sleep of the virtuous.

There is a trite old apophthegm which assures us that fortune favors the bold; and assuredly our friend Mrs. Greville proved no exception to the rule. How indeed could she fail, when all had been so admirably arranged? The widowed and handsome mother, seen only transiently when her sable veil was lifted for an instant in the pump-room, or as her well-appointed carriage passed along the street; the two beautiful sisters, looking only the more lovely from the interest inspired by their deep mourning dresses, walking pensively along, arm-in-arm, followed by the grave footman, and guarded by the starched and somewhat sour-looking duenna; no effort made by any of the party to form acquaintance, or to mingle in the frivolities of the butterfly crowd about them; what could be more undeniably correct or desirable?

And then, when the position of Mrs. Greville, and the beauty and fortune of her daughters were considered—for Buskbody and Jen-

kins had exchanged all the family secrets for sundry savory suppers and social cups of tea, shared indifferently with the head servants of the other hotel guests—who could desire more eligible acquaintance?

CHAPTER VI.

“AND did the man positively assert, from his own knowledge, that these Miss Grevilles were rich heiresses, Collins?” asked Lady Dampmore of her woman, as she set before her toilette-glass, putting the last touch of rouge to a cheek already outblossoming nature. “I always receive such reports with great reservation.”

“I can assure you, my lady,” was the rejoinder, “that Mr. Jenkins can’t in no way be mistaken, for all the upper servants were by to hear the poor gentleman’s will read; and although Mr. Jenkins is only the Honorable Mrs. Greville’s own man here, he was under-butler at the Lodge, and so was present himself when the lawyer gave it out, as plain as I’m telling it to your ladyship. The widow got a good fortune of so much a year, with thousands of pounds ready money, and heaps of pictures and silver; and the young ladies £30,000 a-piece, all independent-like of their mamma.”

“They are very handsome girls, at all events,” half-soliloquized the lady, settling her turban a little further back, to give better effect to a cluster of glossy curls which did Isidore infinite credit; “it is really a pity that they should be shut out from everything on account of their mother’s mourning. I have a great mind to call upon them. I must take it into consideration. Is the carriage round, Collins?”

“Yes, my lady; and here are your ladyship’s gloves and fan.”

And Lady Dampmore hastened where her rubber awaited her.

By some strange fatality, the respectable personage whose acquaintance we have so abruptly made, was, upon the evening in question, singularly absent. She was certainly, if not the most scientific, at least the most successful whist-player, generally speaking, at that period sojourning in the card-loving town of Cheltenham; yet, on this occasion, she trumped her partner’s best card, misdealt, and finally revoked. It was enormously vexatious, as she herself declared. and as the unfortunate gentleman who was her *vis-à-vis* had all along been thinking.

It is a melancholy truth, however, that Apollo does not always bend his bow; and even so the well-practised Lady Dampmore in her turn failed. She was more collected when on her return from the rooms she seated herself at her desk and, before she prepared

for rest, wrote and sealed a letter, which bore the address of "Sir Frederic Dampmore, Bart., Albany, London," and which ran as follows :—

"MY DEAR FRED.,—You well know that I am always alive to your interests ; and well it is for you that I am so, or you would not now be in chambers at the Albany. However, most of your debts are paid, and you have promised not to game again, so I will not aggravate old grievances. We are going on much as usual. Two of our best hands have left ; but we are always sure of tolerable players at the crown table. My last month's gains did not quite pay my bill here, but I cannot complain. Upon the whole, I am convinced that I could not do better anywhere else. And now to business. Among our latest arrivals in the house are a widow with her two daughters, sprigs of nobility, but all *solid* and *satisfactory*. The girls are uncommonly handsome, and have fine fortunes—£30,000 a piece, their servants say ; but this is, I have no doubt, an exaggeration ; if it should be only £20,000, however, situated as you are, it would answer the purpose very well. You had better run down *unexpectedly*, and look about you ; but don't come for two or three days, by which time I shall have made their acquaintance. At present they know nobody, so I shall make my residence in the same house with them an excuse for calling. Take my advice, and don't let this chance slip through your fingers.

"Your affectionate mother,

"DORCAS DAMPMORE.

"*Imperial Hotel, Cheltenham.*"

It was with no slight satisfaction that on the morning after this maternal epistle was written, Mrs. Greville received the gracious and gratifying visit of the amiable Lady Dampmore, who, could she have read the heart of the widow, might have spared herself two-thirds of the elaboration of excuse and explanation with which she accompanied her advent.

Never was guest more welcome. Mrs. Greville was beginning to weary sadly of her solitary state ; and as Buskbody had received a hint from her new friend and fellow-abigail, Collins, that *her* lady was about to call upon *her* mistress, nothing could be better arranged than the drawing-room of the mourning recluse. Lady Dampmore was positively dazzled by the waste of luxury around her, amid which was not forgotten the precious miniature in its frame of filigree gold.

They were both clever women ; but the baronet's mother was no match for her new acquaintance. Lady Dampmore had all the courage of Mrs. Greville, but she handled her speculations roughly, and wanted the delicate tact and touch of the new-made relict.

Had they exchanged *roles*, for example, Mrs. Greville would never have mentioned, during her first visit, the existence of her son ; while Lady Dampmore, on the contrary, expatiated on his numerous excellencies, and lamented over her hard fate that she never could induce him to give her any of his company, and must not venture to expect even a glimpse of him during her stay at Cheltenham ; a place of which she declared he detested the very mention. Mrs. Greville, as a matter of course, most kindly condoled with her upon the privation, and almost before her visitor left the room was busied in marvelling within herself how many days would probably pass by before the young baronet arrived, and which of the girls he would prefer.

The war of wits was by no means equal, and the Miss Grevilles sat by in graceful silence. Arabella was sorting silks, and looking occupied behind an embroidery-frame, wherein was stretched an elaborate piece of laborious idleness, admirably executed by one of the young people of Mrs. Wilks's establishment, and which passed for an undeniable evidence of her own taste and industry ; while Blanche, seated under the shadow of her harp, might have passed for a modern Cecilia. Altogether, the effect produced upon Lady Dampmore was everything that could be wished ; and as she traversed the gallery to regain her own apartments, she gave herself considerable credit for the promptitude which had led her to secure so tempting an opportunity of retrieving the shattered fortunes of her profligate son.

CHAPTER VII.

SINCE the first visit of Lady Dampmore the habits of the Greville family had completely changed. Nothing could be more considerate and obliging than Lady Dampmore ; she sat an hour or two every day with her new friends, and it was amusing to see with what perseverance each lady sought to draw the other out, and how skilfully Mrs. Greville confined all her communications to her period of luxury and splendor. These confidential communions afforded her, moreover, the opportunity for which she had long watched, of lamenting that her poor girls had been reared in habits of expense, which, under *existing circumstances*, they ought not to indulge.

Lady Dampmore was at first a little startled ; but the remark had been made with such a happy, tranquil, satisfied smile, that she answered it by another equally unembarrassed, and merely replied, that if every one thought like herself, the Miss Grevilles would

have nothing to desire. Then there was always a couple of seats in her carriage at the service of her "young friends;" and on the fifth morning of their happy intimacy she actually carried them off to a concert, despite the well-acted reluctance and disclaimers of their mother, who entreated "Dear Lady Dampmore" not to inoculate her poor girls with a love of dissipation.

And thus a week passed by; and both the elder ladies, each in the recesses of her own breast, began to wonder at the protracted absence of the much-desired baronet. On the eighth morning he terminated all doubts and fears by his presence; but, much to the dismay and dissatisfaction of his lady-mother, he did not come alone; and, as if to annoy her still further, his companion was the handsome Charles Lorraine, a young barrister of family and talent, likely to turn the heads of half the young ladies in Cheltenham.

"Don't look so black, Lady D.," was the first salutation of the affectionate son, as the friends shook hands with the discomfited manœvrer; "didn't you write word that there were two of them? Surely you never meant me to marry them both! so I thought it only fair to give a friend a chance; and if we can't agree about a choice we must have a cast of the dice, and decide it in a business-like manner."

"Dampmore is as hair-brained as ever, you see my dear madam," remarked Lorraine, as he watched the frown deepening upon the brow of the lady; "do not, however, indulge him by putting a moment's faith in his rhodomontade. My errand in Cheltenham is not to marry a wife, but to visit a sick friend, and as your son was also purposing a run down here, he good-naturedly postponed his journey for a couple of days in order that we might travel together."

This piece of information did not by any means tend towards the restoration of Lady Dampmore's placidity. What mischief might not the absence of those two days have done! And then, as she also reflected, the sick friend could not absorb all Mr. Lorraine's time, and what chance would her sallow, attenuated, sickly-looking son have against such a rival? It was really too bad! Remedy, however, there was none; the evil was done; and thus her good genius soon whispered that she had better make the best of the matter, and not irritate Sir Frederick into opposition—a feat very easily accomplished—by any exhibition of displeasure.

Then, again, what her son had remarked was certainly a fact—he could not marry them both; and his title was something of a set-off against Lorraine's handsome face; a second flirtation might also cause a diversion, and prevent the attention of Mrs. Greville from being too exclusively fixed upon the movements of the baronet, and her mind from dwelling undividedly upon his circum-

stances ; a study which would inevitably, as Lady Dampmore believed, induce some very inconvenient inquiries from the mother of the co-heiresses, and in all probability break off the match.

Poor Lady Dampmore, however, clever as she was, did not understand Mrs. Greville. The latter lady was by no means disposed to be categorical or curious upon such points ; she simply "acted up to her principles," and was as anxious as Lady Dampmore herself to avoid all unnecessary explanation.

An affectionate note from the happy mother of a newly-arrived and unexpected son was soon dispatched to the widow and her daughters, entreating them to take their coffee in Lady Dampmore's drawing-room, quite *en famille* ; and it was, moreover, accompanied by the assurance that Sir Frederic, even upon the mere description of her new friends, was most eager to make their acquaintance ; and would, had she encouraged him in so ultra a measure, have already called to pay his respects. In conclusion, Lady Dampmore declared herself to be so very, very happy that she required only the presence of dear Mrs. Greville and her sweet girls to complete her satisfaction ; and in this at least she was sincere, for "the Duke" himself never longed more ardently for the moment when he could say "Up, boys, and at them !" than did Lady Dampmore for that in which she should salute one of the young beauties as her daughter.

"Dear Mrs. Greville" was however quite aware that both she and "her sweet girls" were seen to much greater advantage in her own apartments, surrounded by the costly elegancies of the dismantled Lodge, than they could possibly be elsewhere. At home they were a family group set in a gorgeous frame ; abroad they were still attractive, it is true, but they lost the advantage of all the silent implications of wealth which helped forward her projects better than words ; and such being the case, she replied by disclaiming the possibility of visiting even "dear Lady Dampmore" at so early a period of her widowhood ; and requesting that, waiving all ceremony, the party would do her the favor to meet in her rooms, instead of attempting to lure her from what she felt to be her duty.

No hesitation to comply with so agreeable and reasonable a request was even affected ; and accordingly at nine o'clock Sir Frederic and his friend were introduced, and most gracefully and cordially received by the widow and her daughters. Arabella and Blanche did their duty admirably, for they both looked beautiful ; and Mr. Lorraine was soon ten fathoms deep in love with the majestic person and delicious voice of the elder sister. He was himself an excellent musician, with a voice rarely equalled in amateur life ; and while Sir Frederic lounged listlessly on a sofa,

keeping up what he denominated a conversation with Mrs. Greville, and occasionally addressing a sleepy remark to the other members of the party, his friend was singing duets with Arabella, and promising to forward to her, on his return to town, as much new music as would occupy her for the next six months. The mother bit her lips, and tried to look unconcerned ; but the annoyance of Lady Dampmore was beyond all concealment.

Little however availed all her generalship ; her signals were disregarded. The long, lank limbs of her amiable son were stretched comfortably across the carpet, his mouth was close to the ear of Mrs. Greville, and the only perceptible symptom which he gave of enacting the *role* of a modern Cœlebs, was the distention of his large, light, meaningless eyes, as he turned them upon Miss Greville and his friend. He seemed to envy their rapid advances towards intimacy, although he was too indolent to emulate them ; nor did he show the slightest animation until his excellent mother hinted something about *écarté* (at which patrician amusement she contrived before the party broke up to ease her hostess of five guineas), when he suddenly awoke as if touched by an enchanter's wand, and proposed to try his fortune against Blanche.

Poor, pretty Blanche ! Inexperienced as she was, she was quite conscious, from the comments of her mother on the receipt of the note which had collected together their impromptu circle, that it was an experimental meeting ; and although she had, with the natural instinct of a free, fresh nature, turned with admiration to the beauty of Mr. Lorraine, she had nevertheless been tutored in the school of expediency sufficiently long to be quite aware that Sir Frederic was "a great catch," in spite of his saucer-eyes, his sallow complexion, and his indifferent and almost insolent listlessness. Nay, so well do we understand the humour of women, even the youngest and the fairest, that we are not quite satisfied that the last negative quality quoted was not the surest triumph of the baronet.

In courtesy and manner he could not compete with his friend more successfully than in mind and person ; and the very attempt at rivalry would consequently have been premeditated failure ; whereas a woman considers it a triumph to her beauty when she succeeds in making a mass of inert matter, like Lady Dampmore's son, give signs of life ; and accordingly Blanche very wisely did not pause to consider whether it was herself or the cards which had awakened the gentleman from his trance ; but very meekly rang the bell, which he suffered her to do without changing his position, and prepared to administer to his amusement in his own way.

It is possible that some young beauties might have felt disposed

to rebel in so extreme a case : but it must be remembered that Miss Blanche Greville had served a very stringent and effective apprenticeship under her honorable and egotistical papa, during which time she had imbibed very magnificent notions of the privileges of the other sex ; and that she had, moreover, certain very disagreeable reminiscences of the nature of her expectations ; therefore, all things considered, she comported herself in a very prudent and praiseworthy manner, and proved herself quite worthy of the admirable tuition of her exemplary mother.

So well indeed did she act upon the instructions which she had received, that she commenced her gambling campaign by objecting to the points proposed by her adversary ; who, anxious not to lose his time entirely, even in the society of a beautiful girl who *might* hereafter become his wife—for he had as yet by no means decided that he cared which of the fair sisters he should honor with his hand, provided he secured the fortune of one of them—thought it as well to win a few pounds by way of keeping himself awake, especially where money was so evidently no object ; nor did she confine herself to a single objection, for she very heroically accounted for her reluctance by saying that she considered it a point of principle that girls without fortune should not indulge in high play. The little expletive fell innoxious, however ; for Lady Dampmore had already mentioned to her son this “peculiarity of the Greville girls, and their evident inclination to be loved for their own sakes.” So Sir Frederic only smiled one of his inane and languid smiles, and left the points to her own discretion.

When the party broke up, the effects of this delicate policy were highly favorable to Blanche ; for the gentleman was, contrary to all his calculations, a considerable loser. *Ecarté* had been one of the valetudinary amusements of Mr. Greville, and by dint of practice the ladies of his family were great proficient in the game. Their mamma had judged it expedient to lose to Lady Dampmore ; for she felt that the five guineas which she disbursed were by no means wasted ; but Blanche, with the natural enthusiasm of her age, threw all her energies into her occupation ; nor could she have played her cards better under the circumstances—we beg it to be distinctly understood that in using this expression we do not even mean to imply a pun—for the astonishment of Sir Frederic at the skill of his fair antagonist was so great that it enhanced immensely his respect for her intellect.

Such a wife, properly managed, as he promptly reflected, would be a fortune in herself. As she won game after game, he looked at her more attentively, and remarked that her eyes were “darkly, deeply, beautifully blue ;” that her hair was like threads of gold, and encircled her calm, fair brow as with a glory ; that her arms

and her hands were faultless ; and that, in short, with her £30,000, or even £20,000, thrown into the balance, she was the very wife suited to him.

Lorraine, meanwhile, had entirely forgotten that Arabella was an heiress ; he did not even heed her disclaimer when some allusion was made to the subject of money ; he was dazzled and entranced. She was so very lovely, so very graceful, so very musical ; he almost wished that he had known her as many months as hours, that he might have flung himself at her feet, and poured out all his passion.

A happy woman was Mrs. Greville, when she sought her pillow that night. To be sure, Arabella should have captivated the baronet ; but who could control destiny ? and it was decidedly a great stroke of good fortune that each of the girls had secured a suitor at once ; for that the gentlemen were both caught, she would not permit herself to doubt. A few awkward misgivings as to the final result of her policy, did indeed somewhat damp the self-gratulation of the lady, but she put them aside. Sufficient to the day was the evil thereof ; and they had both behaved admirably !

The reflections of the rest of the party were less satisfactory. With all her anxiety for her son, and the natural tendency of a mother to overlook his defects, Lady Dampmore could not conceal from herself that neither in person nor manner was he worthy of either of the elegant, and accomplished, and beautiful Miss Granvilles. He was ruined ; his estate heavily mortgaged, and his word pledged for debts which he could not pay off for years. Had the fair sisters passed only one season in town, the case would have been altogether hopeless, for they must have heard much which by no means redounded to his credit. It was in their ignorance only that she had trust ; and she felt, moreover, that if Sir Frederic's suit was to be brought to a happy issue, it must be principally through her own agency, for that he was far too indolent to exert himself, even in so extreme a case as this. She remembered the different bearing of Lorraine ; the undisguised admiration which had brought a flush to the cheek of Arabella, and given a tremor to her voice ; and she sighed to think that *his* success, at least, was beyond a doubt.

Despite all difficulties, however, Lady Dampmore decided that the affair must be brought to a conclusion with all possible and decent speed ; some busy London friend might warn Mrs. Grenville before her daughter was committed, and then all her exertion and anxiety would have been vain.

“ Happy’s the wooing that’s not long a-doing,”

murmured the unfortunate lady to herself ; “ and assuredly if this

is long 'a-doing' it will never be done ; so I must refuse Sir Frederic money the next time he asks for it, and that will put him on the *qui vive*, and settle the matter at once."

"So much for running down to Cheltenham!" mused Lorraine, as he flung himself into a chair in his dressing-room ; "I have certainly taken leave of my reason. How can I hope that such an angel as Arabella Greville (women are always angels with men in love) would bestow herself on me? I have family, it is true ; but her blood is as good as mine—talents, they tell me ; but she is all mind, it breathes in every note of her sweet and exquisite voice—my career is scarcely yet commenced, my income is limited, and she is enshrined, as indeed she ought to be, in indulgence and luxury—and then, her money—ay, that vile money!—that at once overthrows every hope. Mrs. Greville is a woman of the world ; she will never listen to me, even should Arabella be induced to do so. I will leave Cheltenham to-morrow. I will see General Spencer in the morning, and start by the mail at night. I will go back to my solitary chambers, and—forget her!"

"Devilish deal of trouble, this love-making!" muttered Sir Frederic Dampmore, as, with his hands thrust into the large pockets of his *robe-de-chambre*, he paced up and down his room, pausing at intervals to swallow a draught of hot brandy-and-water from a large tumbler which stood upon his dressing-table. "Bore, too, staying at this confounded place, where there's nothing rational to do. I'd give her up at once, if it wasn't for the £30,000. Not but the girl's devilish pretty, and clever too, in her way. Mighty quick at the cards. Egad, she's nearly cleaned me out ; and Lady D. is not pleased, after all. Says I didn't exert myself ; after sitting quietly for two hours, and losing my money like a pigeon ! There's no satisfying some people, However, I must try what I can do, and Lorraine must speak a good word for me ; that's only fair, as I brought him down." And so Sir Frederic Dampmore went to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WELL, ARABELLA, what think you of our new friends?" asked Miss Blanche Greville of her sister, as soon as the two beautiful girls found themselves *tête-à-tête* in their own apartment.

"Nay, Blanche ; what think you of them?" was the equivocal retort ; "you are the person who engrossed the coveted baronet. His friend, you know, is a mere supernumerary, whom we may never see again."

Blanche laughed and pouted, as she replied carelessly, "Well, then, if you ask my opinion, I consider the coveted baronet a stick; and, moreover, a very ugly one; as rough as an Irishman's shillelagh, as stiff as a marshal's baton, and as unwieldy as the staff of a drum-major; in short, a mass of ill-compounded matter, as inferior to his dear, delightful, loveable mother, as one human being can possibly be to another. I like Mr. Lorraine a thousand times better."

Arabella blushed; and her fine brows contracted with an expression very like annoyance.

"Heigho!" resumed Blanche, as she removed the comb from her magnificent hair, which fell almost to her knees; "they say that we are very pretty girls, Arabella; and it is well that it is so, as it is our only chance of being commonly comfortable in our marriage state; for it is certain that the men who marry us will most decidedly burn their fingers."

"We have now come to the point, my dear Blanche," said Arabella, in a tone of deep and unaffected feeling, throwing herself back into her chair, and pressing her small hand heavily upon her forehead; "I have thought, for the first time during this eventful evening, most seriously of our position, and I feel it to be an ignoble one, Blanche—mean and unworthy—an existence of acted falsehood and systematic deceit."

"What *can* you possibly be talking of, Arabella?"

"Of ourselves, my dear sister—of Mrs. Greville's husband-hunting daughters. Do not be angry, Blanche; but listen to me patiently. I am not about to speak harshly of our mother. We will hope that she is doing what she conceives to be her duty; but the last few hours have taught me that she has mistaken her path. Your eyes are not yet opened, for neither your heart nor your imagination is touched. I will confess to you that such is not my case; nor will I affect blindness to the effect which I produced to-night upon Mr. Lorraine. Blanche, he *shall not* be deceived! I already feel that I would rather never see him again."

"How very absurd!" said the younger sister, pettishly. "I presume that you followed mamma's instructions, and told him that we had no money?"

"I did. But do you in your heart imagine that he believed the statement, Blanche? Can you conscientiously say, that when we were so instructed it was intended that we should be believed?"

"I am no casuist, Arabella; I only know that if we are not married while the ready money lasts, and are condemned to become pensioners on mamma, we shall lead a miserable life. So *vogue la galère*, say I. I am not responsible for the consequences of a policy which I did not originate."

"I would fain hear you reason differently, my dear Blanche," was the subdued reply; "as for myself, my resolution is taken. I shall seriously and positively undeceive Mr. Lorraine, before I suffer his attentions to become more marked. As yet he is not committed, nor shall he be made the victim of my unhappy position."

"Mamma will never forgive you, Arabella, and you will ruin me."

"Do not say so, Blanche; I am convinced that I shall, on the contrary, save you. Mamma's displeasure I must support as I best can; but my resolution is irrevocable."

"We had better say good-night at once, Arabella," broke in Blanche; "my temper will not hold out much longer against your folly." And the first cold kiss that had ever passed between the sisters was given and returned.

Poor Arabella wept herself to sleep. She believed that her tears were caused by the effort which she was about to make, in opposing her mother for the first time, for she was not herself aware how deeply the handsome person and devoted attentions of Lorraine had touched her heart. Her only consolation arose from the conviction that her decision was a proper one; and she strove to believe that all might yet end well. Blanche, meanwhile, in her turn, fell asleep, half ashamed of her own arguments, and half angry with her sister for raising the doubt by which they had been caused. Could their mother have overheard their dialogue, she would not have closed her eyes throughout the night.

The next day was one of gaiety; in the morning the party drove out in Lady Dampmore's barouche, when, despite all the entreaties of the two elder ladies, Sir Frederic insisted on mounting the box, and exhibiting his skill as a whip; upon which Mr. Lorraine, true to his prudential resolve of the previous night, volunteered to bear him company. The servants then mounted the rumble; and, greatly to the annoyance of Lady Dampmore, this expedition, for all the purposes which it had been intended to further, was a decided failure.

A late dinner had just been brought to a conclusion when, greatly to the surprise of all assembled, Mr. Lorraine rose; and apologising for his abruptness, announced his departure by the mail, which was about to start in ten minutes, asserting that he had still some arrangements to make.

Mrs. Greville bit her lips with mortification; Lady Dampmore smiled her regrets; and Blanche glanced furtively towards her sister. Sir Frederic uttered something very like an oath, and rousing himself into energy, began to remonstrate vehemently with his friend; meanwhile, Arabella sat by, calm, pale, and apparently

unmoved ; but she was nevertheless smitten to the heart. She felt, even although she had known him only a few hours, that Lorraine had trifled with her ; and the natural dignity of her sex prevented all betrayal of that inward struggle.

The baronet's arguments, if indeed his wordy objections deserve to be so denominated, produced no effect upon his friend ; Lorraine believed that he was acting honorably towards Arabella, while he was securing his own safety ; and accordingly, making his leave-taking as brief as courtesy would permit, he hurried from the apartment ; and, by a violent effort, tore himself away from the presence of the only woman whom he had ever felt disposed to love.

The field was now left free to Sir Frederic, and nothing could have served him better with Mrs. Greville than the departure of his friend. She became so nervous lest he should follow the erratic example, that she petted and praised him, until he began seriously to ponder within himself whether the mother, "with her hundreds a-year, and thousands in ready money, with silver, wine, and pictures," might not be a better speculation than one of her daughters with £30,000.

Lady Dampmore had no alternative but to praise the grace of Arabella, and the beauty of Blanche ; and to remind him that whoever married Mrs. Greville before her daughters were disposed of would be saddled with them as a matter of course ; at least, until they were of age ; which, accustomed as they were to every description of luxury, would be by no means a trifling deduction from the lady's income.

The maternal reasoning was unanswerable ; and Sir Frederic did, accordingly, seriously incline towards the thought of immediate matrimony ; but judging from the urbane and affectionate *empressement* of Mrs. Greville, that both of the young ladies were equally at his service, he could not decidedly make up what he called his mind. One day he lounged beside the piano, while Arabella, with a full heart, but steady voice, tried over some of the songs which had, according to his promise, duly arrived from town, inscribed with Mr. Lorraine's compliments ; and the next he spent hours stretched along a sofa beside the harp of Blanche, half asleep, and believing that he was making infinite progress in his courtship by the very fact of his presence, without having as yet given either sister reason to conjecture to whom he should ultimately throw the handkerchief.

Thus, to the terror of Mrs. Greville and the mortification of Lady Dampmore, did matters stagnate for a whole month ; when one morning, as the suitor had given his hair the last touch before the drawing-room mirror, and was about, as usual, to take himself

to Mrs. Greville's apartments, in order to ascertain, or rather to arrange what he termed "the order of the day," he turned suddenly towards his mother, as if a new light had just broken upon his obtuse brain.

"Lady D.," he asked, somewhat sententiously; are you quite sure that we are not playing a very shallow game here? On what authority have you put forward your statement as to the fortunes of these two Greville girls? Who told you that they were heiresses? Who knew them before they came here?"

"How many more absurd questions in the same breath, Sir Frederic?" asked his mother in her turn. "I am quite sure of my game. I had my intelligence from the best authority—the very best in a case of this description—it was the news of the second table. The butler of Mrs. Greville told Collins in a fit of gossipry, without an idea that it would ever come to my ears, that he was present at the reading of Mr. Greville's will, when all was bequeathed as I have already told you." And now I have said all that I mean to say on the subject.

"In that case, with your kind permission, I will act," said the gentleman; "and I shall commence operations by writing to Lorraine, and starting him to Doctors' Commons to look at the will. No 'pig-in-a-poke' works for me, Lady D. I may be glad to bite, but I'll take devilish good care not to be bitten." And with a smile of satisfied self-appreciation, the enlightened young baronet drew a writing-table towards him, and forthwith indited the threatened epistle to his friend.

The result will be, of course, anticipated. Lady Dampmore could not repress a shudder of dread, as she saw her son receive the answer of Lorraine, which arrived by return of post; but doubt and misgiving vanished at the "All right" with which he terminated its perusal. The barrister had lost no time in complying with the request of his friend. He had been to Doctors' Commons, had duly paid his shilling for the privilege, and had then read the will, wherein the Honorable Charles Greville had bequeathed to each of his daughters on the day of her marriage, or her majority, the sum of £30,000.

After a careful perusal of the welcome letter, Sir Frederic lost not a moment in calling on the younger Miss Greville, whom he had the good fortune to find alone, stringing her harp—an occupation from which, however, she immediately desisted in order to do the honors of her mother's drawing-room. We feel no inclination to weary either our readers or ourself by detailing the advances of Sir Frederic. That he did his spiriting gently we are bound to believe, as Miss Blanche Greville, the beautiful and the accomplished, did not disdain to listen; and only replied to his verbose

professions by calmly remarking, "You are aware of course, Sir Frederic, that I am utterly without fortune?"

"Deuced glad of it, Miss Blanche!" was the prompt response, as the gentleman pressed the letter of Lorraine closer to his person, to assure himself that its existence was not a dream; "want a fine woman at Dampmore Hall to displace the dowager, and needn't look further. Will you have me?"

"Really, Sir Frederic," said Blanche, with well-acted coquetry, "you have quite taken me by surprise. What do you expect me to say? I can venture on no decision without mamma's consent."

"And if the old lady say 'Yes'?"

"Why then, perhaps," laughed Blanche, "I may consider of it."

And of course, Mrs. Greville did say "Yes;" only warning Sir Frederic to look well into his own heart before he allied himself to her "penniless girl;" equally of course, he told her that he had done so, and that without Blanche he should be miserable. The last argument was unanswerable; so the two matrons exchanged a sisterly embrace. Arabella shook hands with her intended brother-in-law, and all was harmony and good-humor.

But desirous as Mrs. Greville herself was to see the marriage fairly over, and Blanche definitely disposed of "for better, for worse," she was by no means prepared for the ardor with which Lady Dampmore (prompted as she declared by her son) hurried forward every preparation for the happy union. She would not listen to the bride-elect when she talked of intrusting her *trousseau* to a town milliner; the craft abounded, as she declared, in Cheltenham; and the future Lady Dampmore ought rather to aspire to lead the fashion than to follow it. And when Mrs. Greville faintly remarked something about collecting their connexions around them upon so interesting an occasion, she laughed her out of what she called her antiquated notions; and cited twenty instances in which personal friends of her own, of high rank and enormous wealth, had left London just before the ceremony, expressly to rid themselves of the crowd by which they must otherwise inevitably have been surrounded.

Mrs. Greville made some feeble resistance; but she had reasons of her own for neither insisting too pertinaciously nor too strongly; and accordingly, after a few days' hesitation and well acted reluctance on the part of Blanche, the time for the marriage was named, greatly to the relief of the two principal parties, who were both tired to death of the farce which they were severally enacting.

This important point decided, Lady Dampmore proceeded to suggest that the ceremony should be conducted as privately as

possible, and that Blanche should have no attendant at the altar save her sister ; while Sir Frederic, on his side, should be accompanied only by a single friend ; in which case there could be no impropriety in herself and dear Mrs. Greville being of the party to church, and having the happiness of seeing their beloved children united. Nothing could be more affectionate and endearing ; and, as both the elder ladies shed tears while discussing the subject, it was of course arranged according to their desire ; upon which Sir Frederic declared that he should make a groomsmen of Lorraine, for as he was by when they were turned off, it would be devilish hard that he should not be in at the death.

The heart of Arabella gave one wild bound as she heard the decision of the baronet ; but she compressed her lips tightly, and no one remarked her emotion. And so a week rolled by. The satins and blondes, the Brussels lace veils, and chip bonnets were all duly trimmed ; and at length the eve of the marriage-day found the party assembled as usual round the tea-table of Mrs. Greville, with the addition of Mr. Lorraine, who had been deposited at the door of the hotel, just as the affianced lovers and their affectionate relatives were terminating their dessert.

Blanche looked uncommonly pretty ; there was a triumphant expression in her deep blue eye and about her small mouth, which Lorraine had never seen there before, but which he took no trouble to understand. Mrs. Greville, too, was radiant, and her joy circled like a halo round her weeds ; nor did the young barrister fail to perceive how much it was increased by his own presence. Lady Dampmore was calm, stately, and somewhat dictatorial—like one desirous to enjoy to the full the success of her exertions—while Sir Frederic was a shade more lethargic and more uncouth than ever. His work was done—"all the love-making," as he took an early opportunity of observing, with great self-gratulation, to his friend, "being happily over."

From his rapid examination of these several individuals, Lorraine ultimately turned, with an expression strongly bordering upon disgust, to remark Arabella. She had placed her chair slightly behind the circle, and beyond the glare of the lights, and he fancied that an emotion of deep pain contracted her fine features at intervals. Amid the strife of tongues, she alone was silent ; but it was not the silence of sullenness. To all the puerile questions which were from time to time addressed to her, she answered promptly and with a smile ; but Lorraine felt that the heart was sick from which that smile was forced ; and, be it from what cause it might, he watched her narrowly.

Could he have detected, in the look or manner of Blanche, one sign or symptom of reluctance at the sacrifice which she was about

to make—could he have seen anything in the bearing of his so-called friend, which implied anything more worthy than the quiet triumph of a selfish nature—there is no guessing how that evening would have terminated. As it was, he remained passive.

CHAPTER IX.

THE morrow came; and at half-past ten, precisely, the marriage party drove from the door of the Imperial Hotel, amid the bows and smiles of all the household functionaries; and after twenty minutes passed in the church, and sundry autographs deposited in the vestry, Sir Frederic and Lady Dampmore drove back to breakfast, followed by their bridal train.

As they entered, the bridegroom arranged his lank hair with his equally lank fingers, and hurried his lovely wife through the crowd which had collected about the steps and in the hall, so rapidly, that she had scarcely time to return the courtesies, or to receive the boquets that were offered to her; and the last carriage had not driven from the door, when he rang for tea and coffee, and warned Blanche “not to be all day changing her toggery, as he wanted to be off.”

The new Lady Dampmore turned upon him the prettiest look of contempt imaginable; and had it not been for the memory of *certain circumstances*, it is probable that she would not have contented herself with a look. As it was, however, she only threw herself on a sofa, and desired “Frederic” to ring for her maid.

The breakfast passed off heavily enough. Mrs. Greville was highly nervous, and took far too much trouble in explaining to Mr. Lorraine that she was overcome by the idea of parting with her sweet Blanche. Mr. Lorraine himself was thoughtful, even to absence, and appeared to be infected by the same malady; while Arabella was drowned in tears, far more bitter than a temporary separation, even from an only sister, should have called forth.

The breakfast was no sooner over, than Sir Frederic and his mother suggested to Mrs. Greville, that previous to the departure of the newly-married pair, whose four greys were already marshaled before the house, and whose respective wardrobes were in process of arrangement on and about their traveling carriage, it might be as well to have half an hour’s explanatory conversation on matters of business. As this desire was intimated, Mrs. Greville gracefully bowed her assent; and, with a heart whose beatings threatened to burst through her sable bombasin, she preceded them to her private room. Blanche had already retired to her apartment

to put on her traveling dress; and once more Arabella and Lorraine were left alone.

Had they been less in love than they actually were, they must have been lost in amazement at the length of time which was consumed in that private conversation; and even as it was, Arabella once or twice glanced towards the French clock upon the console. Soon however she forgot even to wonder; for Lorraine was urging her, with all the impetuosity of a sincere and long pent-up passion, to be his—his, ere some happier man stepped in, and robbed him of her heart.

Arabella, trembling with mingled happiness and shame, could only falter out, "You do not credit what I told you last night, Mr. Lorraine? Alas! alas! how should you? How should your frank and open nature yield credence to anything so unworthy! But here, here on my knees," and she sunk down before him, as she sobbed out the words, "here, in this abject posture, do I swear to you, by all that woman holds most dear, that the tale of deceit and shame is true. Let us part then, Mr. Lorraine. Let us never meet again—for my sake—for both our sakes—only promise me, promise me on your honor as a man, that you will acquit me of all share in this most weak and wicked stratagem."

Lorraine withdrew his hands from hers, and lifting her from the floor he pressed her to his heart as he murmured fondly—"I will promise anything, everything, if you, Arabella, in your turn, will promise to be mine—my fond and faithful wife—my friend through all the trials of my coming life—the partner alike of my joys and of my sorrows."

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Arabella, struggling to free herself from his embrace; "you do not yet believe me."

"Listen to me, dear girl," said Lorraine soothingly, for we may be interrupted. Mine has been a delicate and difficult position. Dampmore, startled by the frequent disclaimers of your mother and sister, wrote to me three weeks back to examine your father's will; I did so, and by the following post acquainted him with the result."

Arabella covered her face with her hands to hide the crimson blush that had mantled over her brow and bosom.

"After I had despatched my letter," pursued Lorraine, "a lawyer-like misgiving came upon me. I remembered that it was not specified from whence the funds were to proceed for the payment of your respective fortunes. It is probable that, after having complied with Dampmore's request, I should have dismissed the subject from my thoughts; but, short as had been our acquaintance, I had learned to love you, Arabella; and I was anxious to comprehend all its bearings and details for my own sake."

"And you found——" sobbed Arabella,

"I found, dear love," interrupted Lorraine, "that the inheritance which I feared would cause your worldly mother—for I had soon discovered that your mother *was* worldly, Arabella—to deny my suit and separate us forever, was a mere fable—that your father had sunk all the remnant of his property in a life-annuity for Mrs. Greville, and that yourself and your sister were penniless. I made the discovery, fully and perfectly, only the day previous to my return here; and I need not explain to you the peculiarity of my position. Dampmore was a fellow-collegian—could I suffer him to be——" Lorraine paused; the word that had risen to his lips was one which he could not bring himself to utter to Arabella; but despite his caution, the pause was to the full as bitter to the shrinking girl. He felt that it was, and hurriedly resumed—"It was too late to interfere to save either party; for I regret to tell you that Blanche has wedded herself to ruin. Dampmore is steeped in debt; his estate is mortgaged; and he is now chiefly dependent upon the jointure of his mother."

On hearing this, Arabella's tears flowed still faster.

"And now, dear Arabella," continued Lorraine, "for so you must indeed suffer me to call you—let us speak and think of ourselves. I cannot offer you luxury; I may not be enabled to do so for years to come; but I can secure to you a home of love and comfort, worthy of your truth and principle. How say you, then? will you make my happiness, and entrust me with your own?"

Miss Greville only replied by hiding her face upon his shoulder.

They had forgotten the event which brought them together—they had forgotten the purpose for which they had been left so long together—they had forgotten that Blanche, whom etiquette forbade to leave her chamber until she was summoned thence by her bridegroom, must long ago have expected the companionship of Arabella—they had, in short, forgotten all save themselves and their affection, when they were startled by the violent opening of a door, and the sudden apparition of Sir Frederic Dampmore.

"What are you two about here?" he exclaimed with a convulsive laugh—his usually leaden eye burning with a fierce light, and his thin lip quivering with agitation, as he rushed to the breakfast-table, and poured out a tumbler of champagne, which he emptied at a draught: "Love-making, eh? All right, old fellow! I'm off with my handsome heiress, and advise you to make sure of the sister. Don't lose time, either, or some rascal or another may step in and spoil your chance. I should like you to share my luck. Curse all monopolies! I don't want to be the only happy man on this auspicious day. All right, you know, eh? You saw it with your own eyes, so there can be no mistake. Why don't you pluck up a spirit, and offer yourself to Arabella and her £30,000?"

"I have done so," replied Lorraine, quietly; "and she has honored me by accepting my hand."

"I'm glad to hear it, old boy!" said the baronet with another yell of laughter, as he gave his friend a violent blow between the shoulders, and then tossed off a second bumper of champagne. "Here's to your happy bridal! And I hope that you'll be prudent when you come into your property, and not make ducks and drakes of it, as I've done. Where's Blanche? Where's my heiress? She must come and salute her new brother-in-law. But you're sure you're serious, Lorraine? That you're not humbugging? I'm a little hard of belief this morning."

"I am quite serious," said Lorraine, in a constrained tone; "I should not venture to trifle with Miss Greville."

There was something in this assertion which struck the half-intoxicated baronet as so eminently ridiculous, that he threw himself down upon his favorite sofa, in order to laugh more at his ease; and the paroxysm had not yet abated when the door once more opened, and admitted the elder Lady Dampmore and Mrs. Greville. The brow of the dowager was as black as night; her cheeks were flushed, and her breath came quick and hard, like that of one who has not yet mastered some violent emotion. Her companion, on the contrary, was as pale and calm as a piece of statuary; her look was somewhat troubled, indeed, as her eye first fell upon Lorraine; but she conquered the weakness in a moment, and sailed towards the upper end of the room, with a cold, hard smile upon her lips.

"Give me leave, my good mother-in-law," said Sir Frederic, when he became somewhat more composed, raising himself upon his elbow as he spoke; "give me leave to present to you, and to back by my best recommendation, Mr. Charles Lorraine, who is a candidate for your other heiress. You will not, I suppose, forbid his addresses; and I invite myself to the wedding."

"You are, I trust and hope, aware, sir," said Mrs. Greville, turning composedly towards the new suitor, "that my daughters are portionless?"

"Perfectly, madam," replied Lorraine, as he looked steadily towards her. "I am aware that Mr. Greville, after a career of egotistical indulgence, converted the remainder of his property into a life-annuity for yourself; and that, in the partial aberration of his last moments, he was induced to make a parchment bequest to his daughters—with what intention I have too much respect for Miss Greville to inquire."

As Lorraine spoke, Mrs. Greville sunk speechless and aghast into a chair near which she had been standing; while the baronet sprung from the sofa in a blustering attitude, and approached him, evidently with a hostile intent.

"Hear me out, Dampmore," said the barrister, as he waived him off with a quiet dignity, which produced an instant effect upon the mystified senses of Sir Frederic, "for until you are told that it was only two days ago that I learned this, you have some reason to believe that you have cause of complaint against me. I now beg to explain that fact; and also to remind you that there were circumstances connected with your own affairs, which would have rendered any interference on my part unnecessary and absurd, as well as impertinent."

The baronet skulked silently and sullenly back to his sofa.

"Come, come, Dampmore," persisted Lorraine; "let us eschew all malice. Are we not to be brothers-in-law? and that, I trust, not many weeks hence; and have you not already invited yourself to my wedding? And after all, what are you, my dear fellow, but the biter bitten? The world is full of such mistakes as yours; and, moreover, have you forgotten that you have married one of the prettiest women in England, and that she has had on her traveling bonnet for the last hour?"

"Mr. Lorraine is quite right, Sir Frederic," said Mrs. Greville, rallying her spirits; "you are indeed a laggard bridegroom. Pray do not, by your own childish folly, expose to all the inmates of the hotel, that, after all the asseverations of myself and my daughters, you have been the dupe of your own disbelief that there were persons in the world of sufficient moral courage to act up to their principles."

"Spare your sententiousness, madam," said Lady Dampmore, as she motioned her son from the room. "I would advise you to take leave of your able assistant, my estimable daughter-in-law, before her departure, which will take place in ten minutes, as I shall be careful that you never meet again."

Sir Frederic gave one general nod; his head was too heavy with the fumes of the wine to prompt him to a wordy leave-taking; but as he reached the door he muttered almost audibly, "Devilish bore of Lady Dampmore to interfere!"

Mrs. Greville had already vanished. She was taking leave of her beautiful and unfortunate daughter Blanche; but Arabella made no effort to follow her; she was so bowed down by grief, shame, and mortification, that she could only weep on her lover's bosom, and beseech him again and again to promise that he would never, when she became his wife, drive the iron into her soul by any allusion to the period when she moved and was known as one of the co-heiresses under her father's WILL.

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